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ABSTRACT

This volume is part of a series of monographs from Australia devoted to outlining an alternative approach, based on neo-Marxist concepts, to educational administration. The introductory essay in this volume attempts to develop and clarify the basis for an alternative, dialectical approach to educational administration, which emphasizes the importance of human agency in the administration of educational organizations. The first section outlines the Hegelian and Marxist concepts of dialectic and shows how a dialectical theory of agency and structure presents a much more convincing way of looking at educational administration than the structural-functionalist position which has tended to dominate the literature. The ensuing discussion draws upon the recent theoretical perspectives of Dahrendorf, Bourdieu, and Giddens to illustrate the dialectical interaction of structural logic with human agency in educational organizations. Four readings by separate authors follow: (1) "Structures, Strategies, and the Habitus," by Pierre Bourdieu; (2) "Power, the Dialectic of Control, and Class Structuration," by Anthony Giddens; (3) "A Structurationist Account of Political Culture," by Patricia Riley; and (4) "Interorganizational Dialectics," by Gerald Zeitz. An annotated bibliography is included. (TE)

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ESA844 Administrative Context of Schooling

Agency and Structure: Dialectics in the Administration of Education

Peter Watkins

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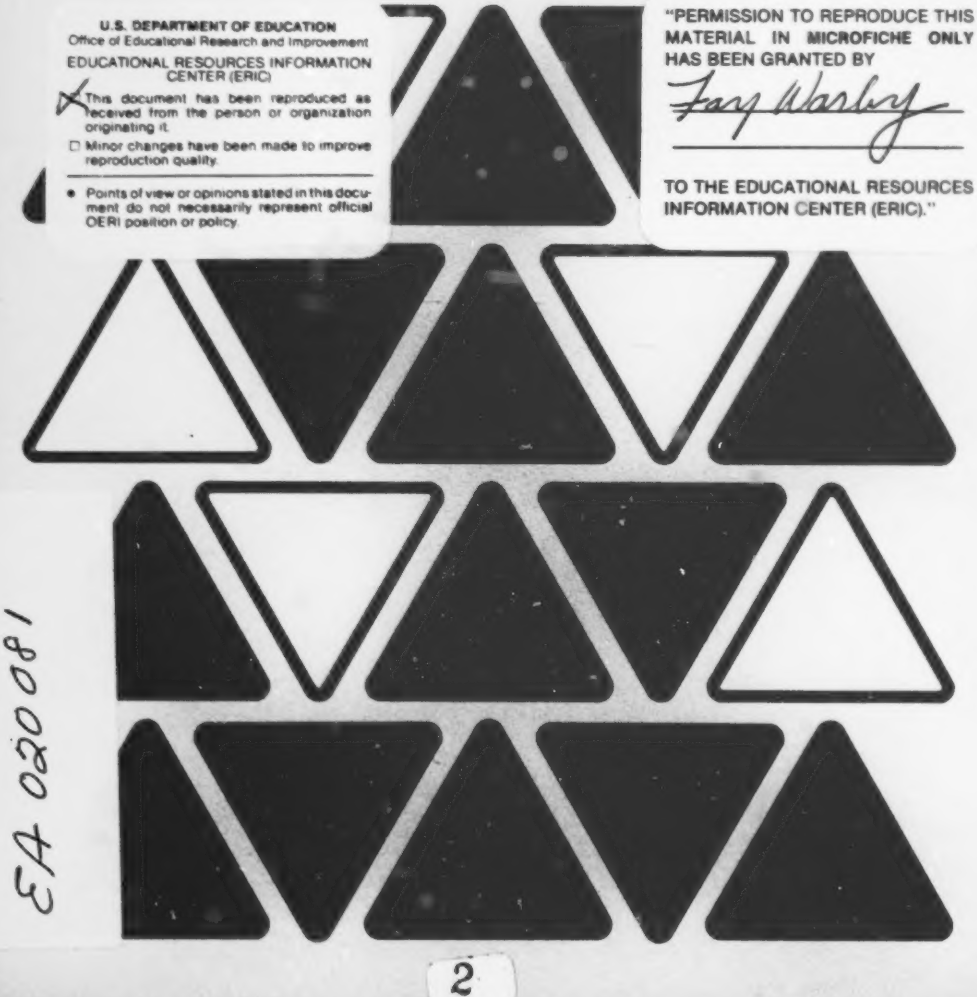

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Agency and Structure: Dialectics in the Administration of Education

Peter Watkins

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The course includes:
Richard Bates, *Liberalism, Marxism and the Struggle for the State: Prolegomena to the Study of Public Administration*
Richard Bates, *Public Administration and the Crisis of the State*
Bill Hannan, *Assessment and Evaluation in Schooling*
P. W. Musgrave, *Curricular Decisions in their Administrative Contexts*
Peter Watkins, *Agency and Structure: Dialectics in the Administration of Education*

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Students enrolled in the course are also supplied with a guide to the course.

Series introduction

It is not possible to understand the nature of educational administration without understanding the broader context of public administration or, further, the social and political debate over the nature of the state, civil society and the economy, and their relationships. The series of volumes of which this book is a part addresses these various issues. Beginning with a discussion of the contested relationship between the individual and the state, the politics of administration is set within the debate over liberalism, Marxism and critical theory, and the nature of the crisis of the modern state. The impact of this crisis on public administration is then examined, especially in terms of the 'new' public administration and the notion of public good. An examination of educational administration follows, as do studies of the administrative context of curriculum and of evaluation. Finally, a discussion of the dialectical nature of educational administration is presented.

The introductory essay of each volume is a digest of current debate and a contribution to it. So that readers may enter that debate rapidly key readings are appended, as is an annotated bibliography of key works in the field. We hope that this presentation of the debate will encourage others to join in the exploration of such issues in educational administration.

Richard J. Bates
Course team chairperson

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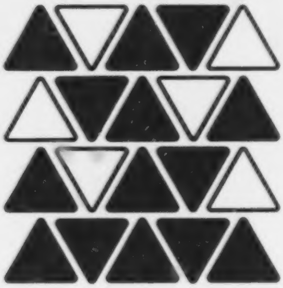

Dialectics: Introduction

This monograph is not so much a critique of the existing functionalist systems – structuralist approaches to educational administration but more a development and clarification of the basis for an alternative, dialectical approach to educational administration. In developing this approach the recent theoretical perspectives of Dahrendorf, Bourdieu and Giddens have been drawn upon to present a case for an approach which emphasises the importance of human agency in the administration of educational organisations. The construction of such a new direction not only allows the formulation of an alternative paradigm to that of the orthodox, empiricist theories but also permits a clearer appreciation of the long historical traditions in which the alternative is rooted.

From the start it must be made clear that most present-day texts in educational administration tend to present fairly static and structural perspectives of administration. The headings of chapters in the standard texts that illustrate this perspective are familiar enough – bureaucracy, motivation, organisational climate, leadership and decision making (Hoy and Miskel 1978). While such a perspective serves some useful purpose it overlooks the human and cultural processes through which structures of administration are created, maintained and transformed. Human and cultural processes are important because they draw our attention to the active participation of people in the process of administration. An action approach to administration, therefore, recognises that 'people are by nature active rather than passive, and social rather than atomistic. This means that people have a measure of autonomy in determining their actions, which are at the same time bound up in a social context' (Harmon 1981, p. 4).

Change, progress or decline, and stability are explained through a dialectical relationship whereby people and structures interact to engender an ongoing transformative process. For in a dialectical theory of administration social reality is perceived as in a state of constant transformation, largely as a result of the mediating capacity of human consciousness. Consequently,

> the intent of such a theory is to objectify the self-formative dialectic of the human species conceived as an active subject, and in doing so orient the active man to his world by breaking through the veil of objective illusion. In this sense dialectical theory is the foundation for a critical science which is a historically-generated and necessary ongoing attempt to understand and transform the human world in accordance with the basic interest of human emancipation from domination.
>
> (Shroyer 1973, p. 130)

When applied to the study of education such a theory demands a dialectical view of educational administration which can be illustrated through a number of important characteristics. First, understanding social phenomena, such as organisations, entails viewing them in relation to their own special and particular features. In Marxian terms this implies conceptualising administration in concrete terms, not as abstractions. In addition, a dialectic perspective requires that all facets of administration should be viewed as a totality of interrelated parts. Also, the use of dialectical analysis in administration would require an understanding of the contradictions which operate within the totality. Contradictions are a generative force which create a tension that is relieved only through the transformation of the existing totality. In this way, an ongoing dialectical transformative process is achieved. Lastly, dialectics is concerned with human reality in praxis. Praxis is made up of a dialectical relationship between theory and practice in which human experience and practice is continually regenerated through self-creating action.

The development of the concept of the dialectic will be discussed in the next section by firstly looking at the dialectic of Hegel and its philosophical basis of Idealism. This is followed by an outline of the Marxian dialectic, which resulted from the inversion of Hegel's dialectic and which has been extremely influential in the formation of recent social theory.

Dialectics: Hegel and Marx

Hegel

Hegel's main object in developing his dialectic was to break down the separation of universals from particulars by pointing out the interdependence that in fact exists between them. However, he argued that this interdependence brings forth contradictions from which eventually a new totality is generated. Thus the relationship between universals and particulars is not static, but rather consists of a process whereby new knowledge is reconstructed from the existing sets of knowledge. It is this process, culminating in the synthesis of opposites, thesis and antithesis, which is the distinguishing feature of Hegel's dialectic.

As McTaggart illustrates:

> The relation of the thesis and antithesis derives its whole meaning from the synthesis, which follows them, and in which the contradiction ceases to exist as such ... An unreconciled predication of two contrary categories, for instance Being and not-Being, of the same thing, would lead in the dialectic ... to scepticism if it was not for the reconciliation in Becoming ... [Thus] the really fundamental aspect of the dialectic is not the tendency of the finite category to negate itself but to complete itself.
>
> (McTaggart 1896, pp. 9-10)

Hegel, however, has been accused of being an idealist who not only stressed the ideal world at the cost of the material world but who also denied the concept of any independent or autonomous existence of an objective material realm of reality (Kieve 1983, p. 38). As Colletti argues:

> The key to everything is in [Hegel's] Comment on idealism in Book I of his *Science of Logic*: 'The idealism of philosophy consists only in this, in not recognising the finite as a real being'. Lacking a reality of its own, the finite must obtain one from the Idea: 'The proposition that *the finite is ideal*, constitutes idealism'. On the other hand, because philosophy is really idealism, it is necessary that 'the principle should in effect be realized there', i.e. the Idea should become reality.
>
> (Colletti 1975, p. 11)

This argument emphasises Hegel's philosophical idealism in which he gives reason a sense of being, an independent and autonomous power within the world. From this point of view reason, intertwined with religion, becomes the major creative propellant of human history. Nevertheless, while Hegel was an idealist he was also an objective idealist (Kieve 1983), who stressed that there existed objective ideas independent of the subjective mind. In this way, contradictions and tensions are generated leading to an internal dynamic. For

> the extraordinary tension in Hegel's works between the desire to apprehend accurately the very structure of human existence in civil society, with its oppositions, contradictions and atomization, and the need to provide a metaphysical resolution to this condition invests the system with an internal dynamic that not even Hegel is able to control.
>
> (Kieve 1983, p. 42)

As well as providing the seed from which the Marxist dialectic grew, the Hegelian dialectic has given a guide to understanding the relationships and interaction to be found within organisations. Gomberg (1964) has discussed the dynamic of the business organisation in terms of Hegel's dialectic of thesis, antithesis and synthesis. As he puts it:

> The cyclical history of business organization can be interpreted in terms of the Hegelian dialectic of *thesis-antithesis and synthesis*. The structuring of an organization is identified with the thesis. The resulting hierarchy spawns the seed of its own opposition, the antithesis. The need for revision is generated within the womb of the organization by the activity of the old hierarchy. The need for new and revised functions grow until they challenge the existing hierarchy. This antithesis, when fully developed, challenges the existing structural hierarchy. Out of this clash emerges either decline or a new hierarchy and set of relationships which we identify as the new temporary synthesis. This synthesis now emerges as the thesis in a new cycle of conflict and thus the process repeats itself as innovating organizers or entrepreneurial managers pursue their satisfactions from the continuous building up of tensions in order to savor their subsequent release. The history of management can be interpreted as this kind of dynamic process.
>
> (Gomberg 1964, pp. 52–3)

Marx

Marx reworked the Hegelian dialectic by standing it on its head. He rejected the mystical basis of Hegel's dialectic and founded the dialectic instead on historical materialism. However, his formulation was no mere crude materialism. For he argued that 'the subject constitutes both an objective world and, through the synthesis of work, changes the social totality in a way that alters the transcendental presuppositions of human praxis' (Shroyer 1973, p. 138).

In contrast to Hegel, Marx demonstrates that theoretical abstractions are formed and develop from the concrete reality of the actual historical social relations which exist and have evolved in society. They do not develop in the reverse pattern, as Hegel had argued. Hegel's was a dialectic of the 'conceptual' world while Marx's was a dialectic of the 'real' world. Engels explained the differences in this way:

> According to Hegel, dialectics is the self-development of the concept ... going on from eternity, no one knows where, but at all events independently

> of any thinking human brain. This ideological perversion had to be done away with. We comprehended the concepts in our heads once more materialistically—as images . . . of real things instead of regarding the real things as images of this or that stage of the absolute concept . . . Thereby the dialectics of concepts itself became merely the conscious reflex of the dialectical motion of the real world and thus the dialectic of Hegel was placed upon its head; or rather, turned off its head, on which it was standing, and placed upon its feet.
>
> (Engels 1951, p. 350)

However, despite the rejection of the metaphysical orientation of Hegel's dialectic in favour of a material synthesis through the dialectic of work and nature, Marx continued to argue that contradictions were still the major driving force of social and institutional production and reproduction. For it is through objectively determined contradictions that the transformative processes of the Marxian dialectic gains strength. However, it should be emphasised that any contradiction that does arise is not fortuitous but is an essential facet of the society or the institution. The opposition which occurs is inherent within a totality. This concrete totality, made up of opposites, constitutes the dialectical concept of contradiction.

While Marx's dialectical method may start from a simple economic consideration of historical relationships, it is developed to explain the practical relations to be found in all human practice and forms of human experience. The Marxian dialectic studies the social relations which exist within society while always placing them within the total historical evolution of society. Transformation occurs when contradictions, oppositions and negations arise within an institution. Each facet of the dialectic acts and reacts with each other facet, leading to a solution and a resultant new totality. At the beginning of *Capital* Marx reflects on the inversion of the Hegelian dialectic which he had developed to explain the material conditions that had arisen under capitalism and to point out the inherent contradictions which are to be found within that system. As he explained:

> My dialectic method is not only different from the Hegelian, but is its direct opposite. To Hegel . . . the process of thinking, which, under the name of 'the Idea', he transforms into an independent subject, is the demiurgos of the real world, and the real world is only the external phenomenal form of the 'Idea'. With me, on the contrary, the ideal is nothing else than the material world reflected by the human mind, and translated into forms of thought.
>
> (Marx 1906, p. 25)

The dialectic precludes a crude structuralist formation of human institutions in which the human condition is regarded as the result of a predetermined structure acting independently of the thoughts, desires and actions of human agents. The Marxian dialectic has within it a dynamic action-process entailing a critical and transformative dimension that is not explicit in the structuralist position. For, as Marx put it,

> in its rational form [the dialectic] . . . includes in its comprehension and affirmative recognition of the existing state of things, at the same time also, the recognition of the negation of that state, of its inevitable breaking up;

> because it regards every historically developed social form as in fluid movement, and therefore takes into account its transient nature not less than its momentary existence.
>
> (Marx 1906, pp. 25–6)

Social institutions, then, derive from the combinations, contradictions and negations of social relations existing within the real world. It is from this view, with human agents as active and praxis-inclined, that the transformation of institutions through the transcendence of the existing contradictions occurs. The main generating force is the interrelationship of human action and the empirical foundations of social institutions. However, human action is not conceived of in a simple relationship with the objective world. For the ability of human agents to be knowledgeable and to develop their own innovative ideas can exert a profound impact on the objective conditions under which they exist.

In the famous first section of Chapter VII of *Capital*, Marx emphasises the importance of human conception *and* execution (see also Braverman 1974):

> Labour is, in the first place, a process in which both man and Nature participate, and in which man of his own accord starts, regulates, and controls the material re-actions between himself and Nature. He opposes himself to Nature as one of her own forces, setting in motion arms and legs, head and hands, the natural forces of his body, in order to appropriate Nature's productions in a form adapted to his own wants. By thus acting on the external world and changing it, he at the same time changes his own nature . . . A spider conducts operations that resemble those of a weaver, and a bee puts to shame many an architect in the construction of her cells. But what distinguishes the worst architect from the best of bees is this, that the architect raises his structure in imagination before he erects it in reality. At the end of every labour-process, we get a result that already existed in the imagination of the labourer at its commencement. He not only effects a change of form in the material on which he works, but he also realises a purpose of his own that gives the law to his modus operandi, and to which he must subordinate his will.
>
> (Marx 1906, pp. 197–8)

Marx here is illustrating praxis, the flowing dialectic between theory and practice, where human beings are neither completely free subjects nor passive agents (see also Giddens 1979).

Instead, if there is to be dynamic interaction between man and nature whereby the world might be transformed, then human agents must first develop a suitable conceptual vision of the change in addition to a sound knowledge of the world as it exists.

In relating this argument to the understanding of organisations, in particular educational organisations, it should be clear that educational administrators should not only be aware of the dialectic interaction between actors and social structures but also be prepared to critique and reflect on the theoretical assumptions upon which present organisational structures are based. By placing theory and practice back together as a totality of critique and reflection, educational administrators can avoid the one-dimensional stance that is the result of a solely technical view of education. The relationship of theory to practice is of essential importance in the comprehension of educational or any other organisations. For 'the relation of theory to practice involves the practical as well as moral problem faced by all administrators of *understanding in order to act*' (Harmon 1981, p. 168).

Consequently, action undertaken by educational administrators would not be concerned with control but rather with creation or transformation of the existing negations or contradictions. In this way any present contradiction is ultimately transcended, thereby preventing its essential recurrence.

This section has briefly examined the Hegelian and Marxian dialectics. It was pointed out that while the Hegelian dialectic was based on a metaphysical consideration of the world, it was reversed by Marx in formulating his dialectic. Marx placed the Hegelian dialectic 'on its feet' by stressing that it is from concrete 'reality' that ideas come. However, this is not a deterministic position, for Marx also stresses that human agents react with nature to express ideas and imagination and that reaction in turn transforms 'reality'. Thus, as the human agent is acting on the outside world and transforming it, simultaneously the human agent's nature is also being transformed.

The next section looks at this dialectical process in much more detail. The work of the modern social theorists Dahrendorf, Bourdieu and Giddens is examined as extensions and developments of the dialectic as discussed in this section. In particular, emphasis is upon how a dialectical action-theory of agency and structure presents a much more convincing way of looking at the administration of education than the systems structural - functionalist position which has tended to dominate the literature.

Dialectics and human agency

In his 'Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte' Marx put forward the maxim which succinctly sums up the direction of recent work relating to the way in which human agents both construct their social world and are in turn conditioned by it: conditioned by not only the constraints of that world but also by the enabling power inherent in it. He argued that

> men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past.
> (Marx 1951, p. 225)

Such a view of social transformation presents an effective alternative to the structural-fuctionalist accounts of society where human action is considered to be determined by the demands of an elite or the economic base and where people react in a mechanical way often as mere ciphers. In contrast, the dialectic interaction of people with their social structures implies both a relative autonomy from those structures and, conversely, a relative dependence on those structures. This permits a clearer view of how the economy is linked to schooling, and of the ways in which educational development is connected to the varying processes of social change.

Similarly, the importance of ideology in education can be uncovered by considering the relations between ideology and human agency. Giroux points out the importance of this process when he comments that,

> as both the medium and the outcome of lived experience, ideology functions not only to limit human action but also to enable it. That is, ideology both promotes human agency and at the same time exercises force over individuals and groups through the 'weight' it assumes in dominant discourses, selected forms of socio-historical knowledge, specific social relations, and concrete material practices.
>
> (Giroux 1983a, p. 17)

In this way organisational culture and ideology are continually transformed and reproduced through the active process of the dialectic between active agents and social constraints. Human responsibility then takes on an important role in the performance of educational organisations. This allows for the clear designation of the relationship which Bhaskar refers to as the points of contact between human agency and social structure (Bhaskar 1978). Too often educational organisations are viewed as containers within which people are acted upon: teachers and pupils are rewarded and coerced; they are motivated and given incentives; they are led, supervised and controlled (see Hoy and Miskel 1978). Yet often human action can be completely independent of the determining approach of management experts. Teachers and students discuss matters having no relation to the prescribed syllabus. Principals and other senior staff may spend considerable time on their indoor plants and school garden. The social ritual of the Friday afternoon hotel group may be the real place where decisions are made and the organisational implementation of change is lubricated. In contrast to the formal, hierarchical, decision-making structure, organisational solidarity may be enhanced by this social ritual where cohesiveness permits the development of a 'natural group' or 'subculture' (Roy 1973).

Similarly, in the managerial view of educational administration morale may be improved by the use of incentives put forward by the employing organisation in return for people acceding to its demands (Hoy and Miskel 1978, p. 117). But such a view neglects the relative autonomy of the human agents within educational organisations. In fact, morale may depend on such diverse considerations as: Are there friendly people with whom you can have a pleasant chat about things that interest you? Is there a comfortable staff room where teachers can relax and doze without interruption? Can you borrow or use the schools' facilities for your own personal needs? Can success with certain classes be maximised while failure with others minimised? Does the school have an interesting in-school and out-of-school social life? (Perrow 1977, p. 102). From this point of view the human agency of organising the staff long-weekend snow trip may have major implications for the way the school is organised in the prior week. For schools or any other organisations are not merely places where people come to work in robotic fashion according to the demands of management. In addition to work tasks, other activities constitute the life and culture of educational organisations. While teachers do generally carry out their teaching duties well, there are a myriad of other concerns and interests – gossiping, joking, bitching, political and social preoccupations – which impinge on the structural constraints of the organisation, and guarantee its continual transformation. Thus, any consideration of incentives and morale includes much more than effective and unobtrusive exploitation by superiors (Perrow 1977). As Bhaskar points out, organisations ought to be regarded as 'an ensemble of structures, practices and conventions which individuals reproduce or transform, but which would not exist unless they did so' (1979, p. 45). Too often the structural-functionalist account of what happens in organisations leaves out the human activities of the practioners within those organisations. The importance of people as active subjects who exhibit a self-consciousness not entirely restricted by management, rules, or regulations cannot be overstressed. Yet this is not to deny the importance of these control mechanisms and other constraints. But agents in organisations, through work and social interaction, undergo experiences which modify, transform or bring into being their values, ideologies and practices. These in turn act upon the way the organisation operates, therefore ensuring a constant dialectical interaction. Thus, Giddens writes that on a larger scale the production and reproduction of a society is a skilled performance on behalf of its members, who produce society as historically located actors in situations that are not of their own choosing (Giddens 1976, pp. 160–2).

The importance of human agency in continually interacting with social and organisational constraints in a dialectic relationship that results in both production and reproduction has received considerable emphasis in the work of writers such as Giddens (1976, 1979, 1981), Bourdieu (1977, 1981), Bhaskar (1979) and Dahrendorf (1979). These writers have in common a rejection of the functionalist interpretation which is often biased towards conservatism, is tautological, and is obscure in its value position (see Burrell and Morgan 1979, Harmon 1981). In contrast, they emphasise the importance of the nonfunctionalist interaction that occurs between the constraints of social structure and human agency. In this interaction the human agents are not seen as ignorant automatons but as having attitudes and values which can bring about change and can transform societies and organisations. As Giddens indicates, 'Embodying a conception of action within social theory involves treating the human being as a knowledgeable and capable agent' (1982a, p. 29). Because 'if actors are regarded as cultural dopes or mere "bearers of a mode of production", with no worthwhile understanding of their surroundings or the circumstances of their action, the way is immediately laid open for the supposition that their own views can be disregarded in any practical programmes that might be inaugurated' (Giddens 1979, pp. 71–2). However, to explain the enabling and constraining nature of structures on agents, these writers conceive social activities as occurring along and embedded within the dimensions of time and space. Thus a fundamental theme is that time–space intersections are essentially involved in all social existence (Giddens 1979, p. 59).

In the following sections of this monograph the arguments of Bourdieu on the habitus, Dahrendorf on life chances and Giddens on the theory of structuration will be examined.

Dahrendorf on life chances

Ralf Dahrendorf is the director of the London School of Economics and Political Science at London University. His major work is *Class and Class Conflict in Industrial Society* (1959) in which he proposed a conflict approach to society in contrast to the Parsonian functionalist systems approach.

Dahrendorf's recent book *Life Chances* (1979), which consists of seven essays, provides a dialectical view of society and organisations which has been applied to the study of administration by Van de Ven in the United States of America (recent papers Van de Ven 1980a, 1980b, 1982; Van de Ven and Astley 1981, Van de Ven and Joyce 1981; Astley and Van de Ven 1983). In applying Dehrendorf's thesis to administration Van de Ven has been concerned with the interaction of structural forms and personnel action. This interaction relates to the way existing organisation or social structures enhance or constrain organisational action, explaining how, in turn, various organisational structures either emerge or disappear. Structures reflecting relations with technology, the occupational hierachy and distribution, and the authority 'structure' are seen in tension with and as interacting with individuals who have their own problems, aspirations and perceptions. The resulting emergent or dissipating organisational structures evolve through the outcome of these dialectical struggles in the context of the physical arrangements of work (see also Collins 1981). As Astley and Van de Ven put it:

> Organizations ... are neither purely objective nor purely subjective phenomena. They are objective systems insofar as they exhibit structures that are only partially modifiable through personnel actions, but they are subjective insofar as these structures are populated by individuals who act on the basis of their own perceptions and act in unpredictable as well as predictable ways.
>
> (Astley and Van de Ven 1983, p. 266)

Educational and other organisations are not made up solely of rules and regulations, timetables or rosters, nor are they made up solely of people, but rather they consist of the ongoing dialectical relationship of people behaving, acting, attempting to achieve certain things (not always the 'organisational goals'), and reacting within certain constraints. In this context,

> at the individual level are the problems of selecting, socializing and controlling individuals for positions or jobs in the structure on the one hand, and, on the other hand, examining how the actions of people over time restructure these positions.
>
> (Astley and Van de Ven 1983, p. 266)

Van de Ven and his collaborators have expressed dissatisfaction with most of the organisational literature, because of the emphasis on the influence of external or exogenous agents in the production of change in structures and people, and it must be said that this dissatisfaction could be applied to the literature on educational administration with equal force. They suggest that, on the contrary, the essential origin of change and transformation lies in the tensions that exist between part-whole relations. Developing the arguments of Gomberg (1964), they suggest

> that the very concept of organization implies the existence of conflict — conflict with other individuals, the environment, other individual organizations and, above all, conflict within the organization. If no conflict were present, there would be no need for organization, as the ends of individuals would be realized without any effort.
>
> (Van de Ven and Astley 1981, p. 461)

To explain this part-whole, agent-structure dichotomy Van de Ven and his co-writers have built upon the theoretical position of Dahendorf as set out in his book *Life Chances*. These 'life chances' consist of structural options from which human agents can select, and the ligatures which facilitate and constrict them in their choices. Dahrendorf distinguishes the two concepts in the following manner:

> Options are possibilities of choice, or alternatives of action given in social structure. They are in fact what we have in mind when we speak of opportunities, of directions into which the individual can go . . . From the point of view of the individual, options are reasons, indeed needs for choice; thus 'option' and 'choice' are the structural and personal side of the same coin.
>
> (Dahrendorf 1979, p. 30)

He suggests that, on the other hand,

> ligatures are allegiances; one might call them bonds or linkages as well. By virtue of his social positions and roles, the individual is placed into bonds or ligatures . . . Bonds or linkages give meaning to the place which the individual occupies. Throughout, the element of ligatures signifies meaning, the anchoring of persons and their actions, whereas options emphasize the objective and horizon of action. Ligatures create bonds and thus the foundations of action; options require choices and are thus open for the future.
>
> (Dahrendorf 1979, pp. 30–1)

Dahrendorf stresses that both concepts should be seen as a dialectic, for he argues that to consider options without ligatures has little meaning, while ligatures without options leads to monolithic domination. Any consideration of social structures or organisations, he suggests, should be considered as arrangements of life chances. Human agents confront and react to organisational structures as a sequence of constrained choices which form an ongoing life-cycle trajectory. These include past, present and future choices which have affected, are affecting or will affect human agency. Because ligatures also have a temporal quality they are the cohesive forces that bind human agents to the social structure or organisation. These ties may be made up of personal history, family history, religion or community. (For a discussion of these ties or ligatures, see the study of a Christian Brothers College in Watkins 1984.) Similar to Bourdieu and Giddens, then, Dahrendorf sets life chances in a time and space relationship, although it must be said that Dahrendorf's conceptualisation of the importance of time and space is not as well developed as that of Bourdieu or, especially, Giddens in his latest book (1981). Dahrendorf sees structural change in terms of long historical rhythms. In this there are the dimensions of time and space. As he explains:

> Space generally: nature; space in a more limited sense: nation; space in the narrow sense: region, landscape, community; social space: local community, family. Time generally: 'life'; time in a more limited sense: history; time in the narrow sense: age, range of experience ('generation'); social time: 'social construction of human life'.
>
> (Dahrendorf 1979, p. 74)

This temporal and spatial consideration means that life chances result from an ongoing, flowing, historical dialectic between options and ligatures which are in turn themselves 'socially constructed' (Dahrendorf 1979, p. 74).

Any advances or downturns within the organisational structure are produced by the dialectical relationship between options or choices and ligatures or bonds. Advance or progress is not assured, for progress is too precarious a notion for human agents to claim it as automatic, or 'even general in any respect' (Dahrendorf 1979, p. 60). Indeed change, either downwards or upwards, exists in a dialectical interaction with stability. For example, stability may exist in the everyday structure of teaching in schools while changes may have occurred in the rationale and ideologies which impinge on those historical educational practices and structures (Giddens 1979; see also the change in ideology in Victoria with the accession of the Labor Party).

Mediation of the dialectic, however, is seen to rest in power, which is not just the basis of the distributive structure of an organisation but is also the initiator and focus of conflicts which generate change. Whether it is a matter concerning human agents interacting with constraints through personal behaviour or through the formation of interest groups, the main consideration is the modification of power. Thus 'power is the key category for the analysis of both social structures and social processes' (Dahrendorf 1979, p. 48). Giddens also sees power as a central focus in his discussion of class structuration. As he puts it:

> Power relations in social systems can be regarded as relations of autonomy and dependence; but no matter how imbalanced they may be in terms of power, actors in subordinate positions are never wholly dependent, and are often very adept at converting whatever resources they possess into some degree of control over the conditions of reproduction of the system. In all social systems there is a *dialectic of control*, such that there are normally continually shifting balances of resources, altering the overall distribution of power.
>
> (Giddens 1982a, p. 32)

From this point of view there is in organisations, and especially in the 1960s and 1970s in educational organisations (see Watkins 1983a), an ongoing contest. This contest seeks to change the balance of the degree of power resources embodied in the rules and regulations historically sedimented in the structures of organisations.

Van de Ven and Astley (1981) see the foregoing argument as having profound implications for the understanding and analysis of organisations.

The theoretical stance is the diametric opposite of the system–structural view that has for so long dominated administration and educational administration literature. This traditional view sees the educational administrator as a technician who carefully fine-tunes the school to cope with the demands placed on it. Any change that takes place occurs as a result of the demands placed on the organisation by factors external to it. The educational administrator must detect, understand and respond to the altering demands of the environment so that stability within the school is ensured and the status quo is maintained. The primary emphasis in such a perspective is for the educational administrator to obtain correct information and to implement the correct technical responses in order to ensure system maintenance (see Hoy and Miskel 1978, Owens 1976; for critiques of this position see Burrell and Morgan 1979, and Harmon 1981).

In contrast, a dialectical understanding of organisations,

> because it is essentially a processual perspective, focuses on the dimension currently missing in much organizational thought. It offers an explanation of the processes involved in the production, the reproduction and the destruction of particular organizational forms. It opens analysis to the processes through which actors carve out and stabilize a sphere of rationality and those through which such rationalized spheres dissolve.
>
> (Benson 1977, p. 2)

In an educational community the requirements of that community, of teachers, students and parents, are continually changing and flowing with changes in behaviours, attitudes and demands. As contradictions and inconsistencies develop within the educational organisation, human agents and structures are both reconstructed so that a new synthesis is achieved in the continual flux of interaction between agent and structure.

Theoretical argument such as Dahrendorf's suggests that, by viewing educational organisations in terms of part–whole dimensions of structure or ligatures and human agency or choices, the dynamics of change and progress through structural constraints and human agency might be made clearer. For, by looking at micro–macro interaction, organisational structures can take on new clothes that reflect concerns with culture, rituals, interests, day-to-day struggles, and personal likes and dislikes (see Collins 1975, 1981). In such a context, as Van de Ven and Astley argue,

> bonds and ligatures are socially constructed, give meanings, and legitimate the new position that the individual occupies. Through time, the individual interacts and establishes more intense bonds with some and less intense bonds with others as he or she becomes involved in relations of power and authority that all collective action implies. Conflict and power struggles in the collectivity emerge over the control and distribution of institutionalized options . . . The power struggle reaches a climax when new options are envisioned and become the rallying focus to galvanize disparate interest groups within the collective to join together to do battle with those in power in order to actualize the new options in the social structure. These new options provide new opportunities for individual choice and represent the start of the next cycle of change in structural forms and personnel action.
>
> (Van de Ven and Astley 1981, pp. 463–4)

Educational organisations not only reproduce certain cultural and intellectual requirements but also produce new cultural and intellectual standpoints—conversely, educational organisations are also continually undergoing change as the predictions, behaviour and conflicts of human agents who constitute the educational community impinge on and modify the structures of educational organisations.

This section has examined the theoretical proposition of options and ligatures as put forward by Dahrendorf in his book *Life Chances*. This dialectical view of social structures has been taken up by a number of organisational theorists, especially those working with Van de Ven, who are concerned with 'how structural forms and personnel actions interrelate and produce tensions that stimulate changes over time' (Astley and Van de Ven 1983, p. 266). However, other theorists have also been working on this problem and in the next sections two of the most perceptive and prolific, Bourdieu and Giddens, will be discussed.

Bourdieu: The habitus

Bourdieu has been a central figure in French sociology for nearly two decades. During this period he has been located at the *Centre de sociologie européenne* in Paris where he has employed the help of a sizeable and extremely productive research team. The team has studied a wide range of fields including education, sport, art, religion, language, political science and ethnography. Unifying these considerations are interests in the general implications of epistemology and methodology on the social sciences.

His theoretical formulations are not abstract reconstructions of earlier theoretical traditions but are grounded in the practice of actual people. Much of this data was derived from anthropological fieldwork in Algeria where Bourdieu conducted an ethnographic study in Kabylia of the Kabyle peasants. The details of his period in Algeria and with the Kabyle are found in two books, *Algeria 1960* (1979) and *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (1977). Such background information is important because it should be understood that Bourdieu builds his concepts on actual ethnographic data of human practice and the meanings preconstructed within that practice. Thus he is concerned with developing a theory of praxis which is in contrast to the dominant subjectivist and objectivist theoretical positions in French sociology. In doing this Bourdieu discusses the everyday practices and relationships of the Kabyle peasants in constructing their social reality, and also the more general theoretical explanations that emanate from the analysis. For Bourdieu has a primary concern which is

> the reconciliation of the classical aim of politics—to enable human beings to live good and just lives in a political community—with the modern demand of social thought, which is to achieve scientific knowledge of the workings of society.
>
> (Bernstein 1976, p. xxii)

In his work on education Bourdieu shows how schools and pedagogic theories and practices function as reproductive mechanisms through the mediation of cultural capital. By the process of cultural reproduction the culture of the dominant class is transmitted through the school system, as normal, natural and inevitable. By means of this process the educational system partly recreates the social and economic hierarchies of the larger society through seemingly neutral processes of selection and instruction. Bourdieu and Saint-Martin write:

> Intelligence, talents, gifts—these are the titles of rank in bourgeois society which the school blesses and legitimizes by hiding the fact that the scholastic hierarchies which it produces by an apparently perfectly neutral process of inculcation and selection reproduce, in both senses of the word, social hierachies. In this particular case, the educational system does not only fulfil an ideological function. It gives the authority of its verdicts to one of the least obvious and more effective class privileges, that of what we might call high acceleration.
>
> (Bourdieu and Saint-Martin 1974, p. 346)

However, because the culture transmitted by the school is not a uniform social, cultural heritage but rather the culture of the dominant classes which is used to maintain their power, this is termed 'symbolic violence' by Bourdieu. Thus:

> *Every power to exert symbolic violence, i.e. every power which manages to impose meanings and to impose them as legitimate by concealing the power relations which are the basis of its force, adds its own specifically symbolic force to these power relations.*
>
> (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977, p. 4)

This conceptualisation distinguishes in society a particular form of violence, differing from overt violence which is open and observable, but which is none the less efficacious. Such symbolic violence seeks to impose meanings and to impose *them alone* as legitimate, disguising the power relations which are the source of its strength (Kennett 1973, p. 238).

Through this symbolic violence the school functions as a means of symbolic domination. For as students seek credentials which unlock the gateway to the labour market the school alone seems capable of providing the skills, such as manipulation of language, social dispositions and economic calculation, that are demanded by the economic and symbolic markets. In this way the school operates as a means of symbolic domination, for

> even when it does not manage to provide the opportunity for appropriating the dominant culture, it can at least inculcate recognition of the legitimacy of this culture and of those who have the means of appropriating it. Symbolic domination accompanies and redoubles economic domination.
>
> (Bourdieu and Boltanski 1978, p. 217)

But, as the domination is of an arbitrary culture, it results in a socialisation which is inherently a symbolic form of violence, for the socialisation process does violence to the reality of the basic power structure. The tighter the fit between the doxa or internalised structures and the objectified structures, then the more the 'political order is perceived not as arbitrary, i.e. as one possible order among others, but as a self-evident and natural order which goes without saying and therefore goes unquestioned' (Bourdieu 1977, p. 166).

Thus there is a 'misrecognition' of the educational process by both the teachers and the students whereby they misconstrue the reality of the social world. However, such institutionally organised and guaranteed misrecognition is not a conscious deception but is perceived as the only and natural way to behave within the reality of the social world (Bourdieu 1977, p. 171). This formulation owes much to the Durkheimian tradition which argues that society is bound together by ritually created beliefs. As interpreted by Bourdieu, this entails misrecognition, for although society formulates these beliefs their origins must be obscured. Indeed, only by representing the beliefs as being objectively obtained can their effectivess be guaranteed.

In a later paper, Bourdieu (1980) compares the concept of 'misrecognition to the illusions of a magician'. As he explains:

> The problem with magic is not so much to know what are the specific properties of the magician, or even of the magical operations and representations, but rather to discover the bases of the collective belief or, more precisely, the *collective misrecognition*, collectively produced and maintained, which is the source of the power the magician appropriates.
>
> (Bourdieu 1980, p. 267)

It is because of such mystification of the true nature of the taught culture that resistance towards it is limited, while those who inculcate the dominant culture 'live out their thought and practice in the illusion of freedom and universality' (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977, p. 40).

To make sense of such a system of 'symbolic domination' and 'misrecognition', Bourdieu has developed the concept of *habitus* which mediates between the practices of the individual and the objective social structures (Bourdieu 1979). These individual practices represent those practices characteristic of a particular social class. The habitus, consequently, 'brings about a unique integration, dominated by the earliest experiences, of the experiences statistically common to the members of the same class' (Bourdieu 1977, p. 87). Thus the habitus alludes to a form of cultural disposition which unconsciously relates the individual's chances of success or failure when relating aspirations to the agent's chances of success.

Bourdieu defines this concept as

> the strategy-generating principle enabling agents to cope with unforeseen and ever-changing situations . . . a system of lasting, transposable dispositions which, integrating past experiences, functions at every moment as a *matrix of perceptions, appreciations, and actions* and makes possible the achievement of infinitely diversified tasks, thanks to analogical transfers of schemes permitting the solution of similarly shaped problems, and thanks to the unceasing corrections of the results obtained, dialectically produced by those results.
>
> (Bourdieu 1977, pp. 72, 82–3)

But the habitus is neither a mechanistic function nor a haphazard collection of dispositions. Rather it functions in a relatively coherent logical form which Bourdieu terms the 'logic of practice'. Through this logic, distinctions such as male–female, inside–outside, East–West, future–past are eventually carried into adulthood as powerful unconscious principles which regulate adult life. Consequently the habitus provides human agency 'not so much with particular and particularized schemes of thought as with that general disposition which engenders particular schemes, which may then be applied in different domains of thought and action' (Bourdieu 1971, p. 184).

Dialectics of a theory of practice

Bourdieu's *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (1977) and his recent paper 'Men and machines' (1981) contain his most explicit statements on the dialectics entailed in the construction of a theory of practice. For Bourdieu it is difficult to conceive a suitable theory of practice without suggesting how theory differs from practice, and how they interact and thus transform practice. Implicit in such an argument is the development of a theory of the way practices are generated: 'which is the precondition for establishing an experimental science of the *dialectic of the internalization of externality and the externalization of internality*, or, more simply, of incorporation and objectification' (Bourdieu 1977, p. 72).

Thus, for Bourdieu, practice by itself is not the same as knowledge of practice (Nice 1978).

Central to the way practices are generated is the mediation of the habitus, the 'socially constituted system of cognitive and motivating structures' (Bourdieu 1977, p. 76), whose subsequent daily individual and group practices lead to the reproduction of the very objective structures which produced them. In this way, the particular economic and cultural practices inherent within an organisation or society which eventuate from the operation of the habitus appear 'normal' and 'natural'. As Bourdieu points out:

> The habitus is the universalizing mediation which causes an individual agent's practices, without either explicit reason or signifying intent, to be none the less 'sensible' and 'reasonable'. That part of practices which remains obscure in the eyes of their own producers is the aspect by which they are objectively adjusted to other practices and to the structures of which the principle of their production is itself the product.
>
> (Bourdieu 1977, p. 79)

The resultant relationship between human agency and objective structures is consequently an ongoing process where aspirations and practices are perpetually adjusted so that the habitus is continually being transformed through interaction with alterations in objective structures. Yet, while the human agents are knowledgeable, there is little awareness of the way in which their practices are adjusted in relation to other practices or are themselves structurally limited.

However, Bourdieu is at pains to stress that the practices generated through the mediation of the habitus are not governed by mechanical determinism. As he argues:

> As an acquired system of generative schemes objectively adjusted to the particular conditions in which it is constituted, the habitus engenders all the thoughts, all the perceptions, and all the actions consistent with those conditions, and no others.
>
> (Bourdieu 1977, p. 95)

However, because of the limits to orientation and assignment on the habitus's operations of intervention in relation to the historically and socially situated conditions of its production, 'the conditioned and conditional freedom it secures is as remote from a creation of unpredictable novelty as it is from a simple mechanical reproduction of the initial conditionings' (Bourdieu 1977, p. 95)

Through the development of this argument Bourdieu seeks to transcend dichotomies such as objective and subjective or micro and macro by seeing objective structures as having subjective consequences and human beings as being active agents who through their past history can influence the present and cope with the future by means of the accumulation of experiences. The experiences built up by agents over time, and the past and present conditions of organisations in which the individual performs, result in activities which are in fact the interaction of two histories while the present is the meeting of two pasts (Bourdieu 1981, p. 315).

Human agents within organisations are not mechanistically socialised to punctuality, obedience, etc. but reflect often the relationship between the historical habitus and organisational structures. As Bourdieu explains:

> The dialectic between the propensities contained in habitus and the demands entailed in job descriptions has equally strong, though less visible, effects in the most regulated and rigid sectors of the social structure, such as the oldest, most codified branches of the civil service. Some of the most characteristic features of the conduct of junior officials—a tendency towards formalism, fetishism about punctuality, strict adherence to regulations, etc.—are far from being a mechanical product of bureaucratic organization. They are in fact the manifestation, within the logic of a situation particularly favourable to its implementation, of a set of dispositions that also manifests itself outside the bureaucratic situation and which would be sufficient to predispose the members of the petty bourgeoisie to practise the virtues demanded by the bureaucratic order and exalted by the ideology of 'public service': probity, meticulousness, rigour and a propensity for moral indignation.
>
> (Bourdieu 1981, p. 312)

Thus the biography and class position of human agents can be depicted as both a consequence and a means of reconstituting the practices of organisations in which they work. For 'objective structures are themselves products of historical practices and are constantly reproduced and transformed by historical practices whose productive principle is itself the product of the structures which it consequently tends to reproduce' (Bourdieu 1977, p. 83).

Time

The dialectic between subjective human agency and objective organisational or social structures is placed within the context of time. Bourdieu grounds the passing of time within the agent's practice which contrasts with the structuralist model where time is not considered. He criticises such exclusion because

> the detemporalizing effect ... that science produces when ... it imposes on practices inscribed in the current of time, i.e. detotalized, simply by totalizing them, is never more pernicious than when exerted on practices

> defined by the fact that their temporal structure, direction and rhythm are *constitutive* of their meaning.
>
> (Bourdieu 1977, p. 9)

But this is not a reversion to subjectivism whereby structures are formed through the sole constructions of social actors. For

> only by constructing the objective structures . . . is one able to pose the question of the mechanisms through which the relationship is established between the structures and the practices of the representations which accompany them, instead of treating these 'thought objects' as 'reasons' or 'motives' and making them the determining cause of the practices.
>
> (Bourdieu 1977, p. 21)

The point is that temporal considerations are of prime importance when considering the relationships inherent in all social interaction. Human action takes place as a continuous movement of action through time, through past and present, leading to an irreversible sequence of practices unremittingly interacting with objective structures.

The role of time is then important to the understanding of the temporal sequence of human agents' practices and the limitations of structure. The introduction of the concept of time allows the postulation of flowing dialectical relationships between human agency and the day-to-day operations and transformations of educational organisations. As Bourdieu explains:

> The habitus acquired in the family underlies the structuring of school experiences . . . and the habitus transformed by schooling, itself diversified, in turn underlies the structuring of all subsequent experiences (e.g. the reception and assimilation of the messages of the culture, industry or work experiences), and so on, from restructuring to restructuring.
>
> (Bourdieu 1977, p. 87)

The chronological development of human practices means that both their foundations and their meanings are located within time in a sequence of triggers and countertriggers where meaning and practice are contained within the fluctuations of the situation (Bourdieu 1977, p. 11). But this also entails a sense of irreversibility. Human practice is then an irreversible series of actions which, while directed towards a particular goal or future, is never assured of the outcome.

While Bourdieu's schema has great power and suggestiveness, there remains a problem. While the habitus locates these temporal practices within a particular organisational context, it does not sufficiently explain how specific individual histories, practices and choices are intertwined with and within the histories, practices and choices of specific organisations. Such problems, inherent in a theory of human agency and structure set within a temporal sequence, are dealt with and developed by Giddens (1979, 1981) whom we will be considering later in this monograph.

Criticism of Bourdieu

Much of the criticism of Bourdieu, for example by Musgrove (1979), is based on his earlier work which had a decidedly deterministic stance and was only later translated into English. Many critics tend to overlook his later general theory of practice which is developed from his anthropological field-work amongst the Kabyle. This is given a strong and challenging advocacy in his *Outline of a Theory of Practice* which illustrates his 'sense of actuality, and of the importance of understanding how the body itself—or rather, your body as your self—carries and becomes your historical memory' (Inglis 1979, p. 362).

Giroux (1983b), while generally sympathetic to Bourdieu, has outlined what he considers are a number of theoretical flaws in Bourdieu's work. First, Giroux feels that Bourdieu leaves little room for resistance which is essentially seen as conflict between two structures. This results in the underestimation of reflexive thought and historical agency. Second, he claims that Bourdieu provides little idea of how cultural domination and resistance is mediated through race, gender and class. Third, Giroux points out that Bourdieu has failed to develop a theory of ideology, in which human beings dialectically create, resist, and accommodate themselves to dominant ideologies. Finally, Giroux points out that time differs for different classes and reflects the power of those classes. Thus, for working classes time is a privation not a possession (Giroux 1983b, pp. 272-3). Nevertheless, Bourdieu's work provides a significant advance on the conceptualisation of the ever-changing dialectic between human agency and objective structures, explaining not only recurrence and reproduction but also innovation and transformation while eschewing mechanical determination.

Giddens on structuration

Anthony Giddens, a Fellow at King's College, Cambridge, has been one of the most prolific social theorists over the last ten years. He has been concerned to reformulate and critically update the classical theoretical positions of Durkheim, Weber and Marx. In doing this he has been at pains to emphasise the creative strength of human agency and praxis, especially the importance of the interaction generated through the dialectic of the individual and society (1976). Secondly, Giddens has placed this dialectical commitment between agency and structure within a theory of society where reproduction and praxis are structurally bounded through the time–space constitution of social systems. For he argues that

> an adequate account of human agency must, first, be connected to a theory of the acting subject; and second, must situate action in *time and space* as a continuous flow of conduct, rather than treating purposes, reasons, etc., as somehow aggregated together.
>
> (Giddens 1979, p. 2)

In this way the ongoing dialectic of practice and structure of individual and institution are situated as actual relationships entwined in time and space. Thirdly, in his *Contemporary Critique of Historical Materialism* (1981) Giddens has developed his theory of human agency and structure to critique and reconstruct Marx's work on historical materialism which Giddens holds to be of paramount importance. For 'Marx's writings still represent the most significant single fund of ideas that can be drawn upon in seeking to illuminate problems of agency and structure' (1979, p. 53). In this way his theory of human agency and structure, or structuration, and time–space distanciation is used to analyse domination, power, property and world history. Overall, then, Giddens's theoretical development is concerned to have '*as its main focus the study of the institutions of the "advanced" or "industralized" societies, and of the conditions of transformation of those institutions*' (1982b, p. 11).

The theory of structuration

Central to Giddens's project is the problem of the development of a wholly nonfunctionalist style of social analysis. To solve this problem Giddens has developed a theory of 'structuration' to set out the dialectics of practice and structure. The core of this theory is best explained by what Giddens describes as the *duality of structure*. By this he means

> the essential recursiveness of social life, as constituted in social practices: structure is both medium and outcome of the reproduction of practices. Structure enters simultaneously into the constitution of the agent and social practices, and 'exists' in the generating moments of this constitution.
>
> (Giddens 1979, p. 5)

Thus the constant interactions of everyday living constitute both the medium and outcome, or product and condition, of our social institutions.

It should be stressed that this essential duality of structure is *not* a dualism but a dialectic interplay whereby human agents both facilitate and reconstruct their social institutions through the 'reflexive monitoring of conduct' (Giddens 1979, p. 56). Thus individuals carry out their daily tasks within a structural framework that is 'both enabling and constraining' and which is thus '*not to be conceptualised as a barrier to action, but as essentially involved in its production*' (1979, pp. 69 and 70). From this position social institutions are perceived as having structural conditions which are drawn upon by social agents as resources and norms but in the process these structures are themselves immediately and necessarily reconstituted. In this sense structure is an aspect of social institutions which is reproduced through social interaction where the 'structural properties of social systems are both the medium and the outcome of the practices that constitute those systems' (Giddens 1979, p. 69).

Bhaskar develops a similar argument in his book when he claims that members of organisations, in their conscious activity, for the most part unconsciously reproduce (and occasionally transform) the structures governing their substantive activities of production (1979, p. 44). And Bourdieu also makes a similar point when he argues that

> objective structures are themselves products of historical practices and are constantly reproduced and transformed by historical practices whose productive principle is itself the product of the structures which it consequently tends to reproduce.
>
> (Bourdieu 1977, p. 83)

Social structures are then to be seen as embedded in continuous social practices. In this context both human knowledge and institutional structures can be conceived of as the outcome of a dialectical interplay between objective constraints and subjective experience. For all social actors, no matter how lowly, '*have some degree of penetration of the social forms which oppress* *them*' (Giddens 1979, p. 72). Knowledge in this sense may lead to only a partial understanding or 'misrecognition' of the power structures or forms of domination that may underly an organisation. Nevertheless, this knowledge, partial or otherwise, produces conditions whereby social agents can act in a way that provides some understanding of their workplace and which allows self-reflection on the social institutions in which they live out their lives. For, as Giddens points out,

> all human action is carried on by knowledgeable agents who both construct the social world through their action, but yet whose action is also conditioned or constrained by the very world of their creation.
>
> (Giddens 1981, p. 54)

In this way the reproduction and transformation of social institutions in which human beings practice and live their daily lives is a skilled accomplishment of actors. Moreover, this accomplishment takes place within the bounded conditions in which the reflexive rationalisation of action might take place (Giddens 1979, 1981) Structuration, then, attempts to enmesh both knowledgeable and acting human agents as integral facets of social structure and the conditions or methods of social action. This takes the form of opportunities or constraints which eventuate through institutions and socialisation; ideology and consciousness, time, space and social change, and power and contradiction (1979).

Time and space

The theory of structuration, with its basic dialectic of agency and structure, has as its core another duality, the relations of time and space, which are themselves dialectically related. The combination of these two dialectics is expressed in the thesis which states that, 'the duality of structure connects the *production* of social interaction, as always and everywhere a contingent accomplishment of knowledgeable social actors, to the *reproduction* of social systems across time-space' (Giddens 1981, p. 27).

In this way human action is conceptualised through the close integration of time and space. This provides the concept of the duality of structure with the idea of binding the interplay of absence and presence in the *durée* or daily flow of life (Giddens 1981, p. 44). Time–space distanciation then gives us a way of seeing how social institutions are embedded in time and space. By distanciation Giddens refers to the processes whereby societies or institutions 'are "stretched" over shorter or longer spans of time and space' (1981, p. 90). By examining the structuration processes of educational institutions we would not only look at the dialectical interplay between human agency and structure but would also examine how those institutions have become historically sedimented within a particular spatial context. In this sense, within schools or other organisations the majority of the ongoing activities are made up of habitual practices which take place in particular locales in time–space.

Institutions, organisations and schools should be regarded as consisting of practices which are deeply sedimented in time and space. To fully understand the interrelationship of agency and structure the time–space relations which are part of all social interaction must be grasped. Human practices are not simply contained and bounded by time and space but rather they are resources embedded in the very dialectic of structuration and, as such, are essential elements in the recursive path of social life. An examination of the dynamics of human agency and structure within a time–space context allows the close examination of the linkages between both the macro manifestations of human action and the micro relations where agents interact and lead their daily lives.

But in addition time has become commodified with the advent of capitalism. This has come about because labour-power then became a commodity. People sell their labour-power in order to live. Labour-power is an additional cost to capital. However, all commodities produced or services rendered are an objectification of the time spent on the work. Thus the socially necessary labour-time governs the value of the commodities and makes them divisible and quantifiable into units of time. Thus:

> The commodification of time . . . supplies the clue not only to the transformations in social institutions brought about by capitalism, but also to the manner in which 'production' or 'the economy' assumes an importance in capitalist society quite foreign to all class-divided societies.
>
> (Giddens 1981, p. 8)

Through the development of this argument Giddens makes us more aware of not only the time–space dimensions of organisations, coupled with the intricate entwining of commonplace practices, but also the operation of power, ideology and the dialectics of control inherent within the social relations of capitalism. However, it is important to note that he does make a distinction between time and the past. As he argues:

> The sedimentation of institutional forms in long-term processes of social development is an inescapable feature of all types of society . . . Only by grasping this conceptually, rather than repudiating it, can we in fact approach the study of social change at all. The exclusion of time on the level of the *durée* of human agency has its counterpart in the repression of the temporality of social institutions in social theory – a repression effected largely by means of the division of synchrony from diachrony. On the basis of this division, sociologists have been content to leave the succession of events in time to the historians, some of whom as their part of the bargain have been prepared to relinquish the structural properties of social systems to the sociologists. But this kind of separation has no rational justification with the recovery of temporality as integral to social theory: history and sociology become methodologically indistinguishable.
>
> (Giddens 1979, pp. 7–8)

However, time should not be unquestionably identified with social change, for time and time–space can be identified with, and can become, a vital part of institutional stability. In this sense the stability of an organisation indicates that there is a close resemblance between how things are organised now and how they were organised in the past (Giddens 1981, p. 17). But in order to more clearly understand development in a social and institutional context Giddens argues in terms of episodic characterisations rather than a smooth evolutionary flow.

Episodes

Rather than proposing an evolutionary schema of change in society and institutions, Giddens presents a view of change in terms of episodic characterisations. For social interaction is characterised by an episodic character which consists of a sequence of episodes with beginnings or ends, or '"openings" and "closings" in time-space' (1981, p. 41). Because these episodes have varying time-space lengths they can overlap, allowing them to be applied to both small-scale relationships and over-arching conceptualisations of the ways organisations operate.

Giddens argues that '"episodes" refer to processes of social change that have a definite direction and form, and in which definite structural transformations occur' (1981, p. 23). However, while episodes involve processes of structural transformation there is no mechanical certainty inherent in those changes. This implies that, while society or institutions undergo change in the form of a series of overlapping, distinct episodes or transitions, there can be no predetermined overall pattern of that change process. Any sense of direction and dynamic is inherent in, and specific to, the particular episode.

The idea of episodes as a fundamental aspect of organisations, especially relating to communication and performance, has been discussed by Frentz and Farrell (1976) and more recently Pacanowsky and O'Donnell-Trujillo (1983). They see communication performances in organisations as distinct episodes or events. The performances of human beings in organisations, in this sense, are embedded in time and space.

> Thus, past performances imbue the present with their specific meanings while the present, by its reconfiguration of the past, transforms past meanings. In short, communicative performances are situationally and temporally embedded in organizational reality.
>
> (Pacanowsky and O'Donnell-Trujillo 1983, p. 133)

Frentz and Farrell (1976) argue that the idea of the episode is the central concept for understanding communication in organisations. They claim that an episode is 'a rule-conforming sequence of symbolic acts generated by two or more actors who are collectively oriented toward emergent goals' (1976, p. 336). These episodes provide human agents within organisations with a means of relating, through their overlapping tendencies, the continual flow of past, present and future events. They provide an anchor through which people can isolate, analyse and reflect on segments of the ongoing flow of organisational interaction.

Within an organisation, episodes usually commence with an initiation imperative in which people acknowledge the presence of one another and their preparedness to partake in an episode. Secondly, in this sequence is the imperative of definition. For people have to be not only willing to partake in an episode but also to have some consensual agreement on the general form of the episode to be enacted. Finally, the episode has to be terminated. This can be achieved through the actors leaving one another's presence or through episodic signals signifying a mutual desire for a conclusion of the episode, with the possible proviso of a future-designated episode. Thus the termination of one episode may be merely the forerunner of a future episode which will form the over-all arching time-space edge that the organisational actors will share. (See Giddens 1981, and Frentz and Farrell 1976, pp. 338–9.)

The concept of episodes is important in understanding the communicative interaction of human agents within organisations. Episodes display the dynamic processes through which agents interact and transform the structural constraints of the organisations in which they work. In addition, the concept of episodes can be helpful when using Habermas's 'distorted' and 'ideal' speech situations (Habermas 1979). An ideal speech situation is one where, in the interaction between the participants, all have an equal opportunity to initiate and continue the discourse; to put forward their argument and justify it; to express sincerely how they feel; and to have equal standings with respect to power. These qualities are, moreover, built into the structure of every potential communicative episode, although they are rarely achieved in actual discourse. Nevertheless, they still act as a baseline against which claims of truth are evaluated. Thus the ideal speech situation in a communicative episode is not an abstraction from everyday discourse because the committment to truth and rationality is inherent within every ordinary communicative episode. As Habermas puts it:

> No matter how the intersubjectivity of mutual understanding may be deformed, the design of an ideal speech situation is necessarily implied with the structure of potential speech; for every speech, even that of intentional deception, is oriented towards the idea of truth. This idea can only be analyzed with regard to a consensus achieved in unrestraint and universal discourse. Insofar as we master the means for the construction of an ideal speech situation, we can conceive the ideas of truth, freedom, and justice—which interpret each other—only as ideas of course.
>
> (Habermas 1972, p. 144)

While the participants in the ideal speech situation are concerned with reaching agreement on norms and values in order to achieve social integration, they will be guided in the episode by the implicit values in speaking. But even when consensus cannot be assured, consensus on the fundamental basis for discourse is presumed. Rather than being based on individual attitudes, predispositions or principles, this consensus is grounded in the universal conditions in which communication takes place. For while successful communication depends on reaching an understanding, Habermas points out, 'reaching an understanding is a normative concept; everyone who speaks a natural language has intuitive knowledge of it and therefore is confident of being able, in principle, to distinguish a true consensus from a false one' (1974, p. 17).

Consequently, it can be claimed that behind all normal and successful communication episodes is an underlying consensus which is formed by virtue of the fact that the participants in the episode mutually recognise four different types of validity claims: intelligibility, truth, correctness and sincerity.

Through the conceptualisation of human interaction and communication within organisations in terms of episodes the work of Habermas and other communication theorists becomes clearer. Change and transformation can be seen as a series of openings and closings of social interaction which are intertwined and overlap in time–space.

Criticisms of Giddens

Dallmayr (1982), although acknowledging that the notion of 'agency' is particularly attractive, is concerned as to how it is practically translated into a theory of action. Agency also entails the difficulty of adjusting to the level at which the concept is pitched. If, as Dallmayr feels, it is too often tied closely to everyday conduct, understood as either activity or doing, then important features of agency might unfortunately be overlooked. In this way the nexus of action and non-action within agency itself might be de-emphasised.

Archer (1982) criticises Giddens for completely ignoring existing efforts to reunite structure and action from within general systems theory. In place of structuration she proposes a specific analytic dualism, based on the work of Blau and Buckley, which is called the 'theory of morphogenesis'. This 'concentrates *on the socio-cultural system in its own right, identifying and explaining the real and variegated structures which have emerged historically and theorizing about their concrete elaboration in future'* (Archer 1982, p. 478). However, it would seem that for the most part she is splitting hairs and presenting often a one-sided and simplistic presentation of Giddens's work.

Much more rigorous have been two critiques by Wright (1983a, 1983b). He finds in Giddens's work an 'attempt at a genuine "critique" in the best sense of the word—a deciphering of the underlying limitations of a social theory in order to appropriate in an alternative framework what is valuable in it' (1983a, pp. 11–12).

For while Giddens's propositions and solutions may not always be completely satisfactory, often lacking depth and an empirical base, he has provided a much needed corrective to the functionalist and the positivist approaches to social theory. Indeed, he has developed an eminently effective resolution to the problems of structure and agency.

Human agency in educational organisations

The central perspective which has seemed to dominate educational administration until recently has been systems theory as in the system structure view of educational organisations. Thus the social system perspective serves as the framework for the work of Hoy and Miskel (1978, p. 46). Such an approach uses the metaphor of a biological system which exhibits a tendency to equilibrium maintaining and perpetuating the status quo. As they explain in discussing the administration of educational institutions:

> Equilibrium exists when the social and biological parts of the system maintain a constant relationship to each other so that no part changes its position or relation in respect to all other parts. As administrators are well aware,

> disruptive stresses upset this equilibrium and create temporary periods of disequilibrium. A community group may demand that a course such as sex education be deleted. This causes disequilibrium, but the system conquers, neutralizes, or destroys the disruptive forces impinging on it, and equilibrium is restored. Because all parts of the social system . . . are related, a change in any one part necessarily produces a corresponding change in every other part. Thus, complete equilibrium is reestablished or maintained.
> (Hoy and Miskel 1978, p. 39)

Such a view of educational administration exhibits a basic interest in technical control, controlling any disturbances so that the status quo can be maintained. In this way systems theory can be seen as functional with the basic thrust of analysing and controlling educational organisations. Educational administrators who impose the organic systems approach on educational organisations in a mechanistic way tend to limit their explanation of human activity to one of adaptation to the social institutions in which they live. In doing this they take for granted the rules, regulations and power structures inherent within the educational organisations that they are examining. As Astley and Van de Ven have recently commented, the system-structural view of administration has a

> deterministic orientation by which organizational behavior is seen to be shaped by a series of impersonal mechanisms that act as external constraints on actors. Structural elements are assumed to be interrelated in such a way that they instrumentally serve the achievement of organizational goals and are therefore 'functional' ... individuals are thereby immersed as component parts of an interdependent collectivity—a structured, interlocking system that shapes and determines their behaviour.
> (Astley and Van de Ven 1983, p. 248)

However, human beings are not automatons to be regulated by the system in a mechanistic way. Teachers and others in educational communities are not mere passive containers of prescribed roles but possess skills and knowledge through which they act and react within educational institutions. For these institutions do not exist independently of human agents but neither are they entirely the product of these human agents. Rather, educational institutions should be seen as a collection of structures, practices and conventions which individuals reproduce or transform, but which would not exist unless they did so (see Bhasker 1979, and Giddens 1979, 1981).

Functionalist writers such as Hoy and Miskel see the development of organisations as basically a non-contradictory process. The dialectical interaction of the structural logic with human agency is completely ignored. Instead, institutions are viewed as being governed by a static system of social relations to the neglect of any recognition of the historical development and growth of those institutions. Even if some historical factors are recognised, the role of human agency in perpetuating and modifying the rules and resources which constitute structure is discounted or ignored completely. Yet human agents as active subjects of history do not guide the development of organisations into some predetermined path; rather the continuous dialectic of individual and institution should be seen in the context of unintended outcomes.

The duality of agency and structure transcends the dualism of voluntarism, in which agents act free from any constraint, and structural determinism, where the conditions not the agents act, through the recognition that institutions are made up of actors who indulge in practices which are both constrained and enabled by those institutions. In this way human agency can often transcend and overcome the organisational restrictions which exercise domination over them. Such practices, while sometimes not being acknowledged by the actors as such, consequently lead to the generation, maintenance or transformation of these institutions.

Contradictions

As was discussed earlier in the section on Hegel and Marx, central to the generation of any transformative processes within any organisation or society is the idea of contradiction. This provides the tension which, when resolved, leads to the production or reproduction of our social institutions. This tension results from the presence of the duality of structure whereby each aspect exhibits both a degree of dependence and a degree of negation. The result is that societal totalities are '*structured in contradiction*, involving the fusion and exclusion of opposites' (Giddens 1981, p. 231). Developing this point of view, Giddens defines social contradiction as

> an *opposition or disjunction of structural principles* of social systems, where those principles operate in *terms of each other* but at the same time *contravene one another*. I want to propose that contradictions arise in the midst of, and as a result of, the structuration of modes of system reproduction.
>
> (Giddens 1979, p. 141)

He goes on to argue that the social relations of capitalism, and of course it could be assumed the social relations in organisations, such as educational organisations, which reflect the macro relations, are inherently contradictory. They are contradictory because, while capitalism has as its core the private appropriation of capital, there is presumed the structural principle of social production which is a negation of the first principle.

Benson (1977), in his seminal paper on dialectics in organisations, sees contradiction as the third of four principles of a dialectic view of organisations. The first principle is the social construction or production by people of their social world. But in turn that production is itself guided and constrained by the context of the social world. The second principle is that of totality, whereby social structures should be seen as part of a larger concrete whole rather than isolated abstract considerations. This is quite different from the traditional approaches to organisation theory with ideas of an environment and open and closed systems. As Burrell points out, the alternative approach to the study of organisations 'through its dependence upon totality and related concepts and the intellectual tradition from which these are derived, represents a different paradigmatic approach to that of what might be termed the "systems orthodoxy" in conventional organisation theory' (Burrell 1980, p. 97).

Contradiction comes about through tensions arising from inconsistencies and incompatible aspects of organisational life. Such strains and conflicts, while they may be temporarily masked or disguised, can be reconciled only dialectically through the process of transformation. In this way institutional change comes about through the resolution of strains and tensions inherent within the organisation [Morgan (1981) terms such a dialectic process the 'schismatic metaphor']. However, these organisational contradictions may have profound effects on the transformative process. As Benson puts it:

> (1) They may occasion dislocations and crises which activate the search for alternative social arrangements; (2) they may combine in ways which facilitate or in ways which thwart social mobilization; (3) they may define the limits of change within a particular period.
>
> (Benson 1977, p. 5)

Contradictions, then, may not only enable and facilitate change within an organisation but may also operate in a way whereby change is constrained. Through this process stability and reproduction, for a while, might be assured.

Benson's fourth principle of a dialectic of organisations is praxis through which human agents within organisations actively reconstruct and reflect on both their organisational experiences and the structure of the organisation. Through praxis people act as knowledgeable agents who have some penetration of the underlying values and biases upon which the organisation is grounded. The dereification of the taken-for-granted institutional structures, combined with the revelation of organisational contradiction and limitations, can lead to the production of new organisational arrangements.

The dialectic framework as outlined by Benson, coupled with the theories of human agency outlined earlier, provides a view of human action within organisations. Human agency from the dialectical position is an ongoing transformative process of production and reproduction, whereby the creative actions of knowledgeable people are both constrained and enabled by the rules and resources or structures of organisations.

Contradictions in the administration of education

The previous section has indicated the importance of contradiction as a generative force in the dialectics of organisations. In this section contradictions in the administration of education will be presented which, as has been argued in the monograph, leads to transformation, production and reproduction of society and social institutions.

One of the most obvious areas of contradiction within the administration of education is that between education and work. One important process that schools carry out is to sort, certify and legitimate the allocation of students into the various sectors of the economy. But, in addition, education is seen as a means of achieving economic and social mobility by virtue of academic merit. However, the increasing quest for skills certified by schools is being paralleled by technological change in the workplace resulting in more fragmented and routinised work procedures.

Thus, while there has been an expansion in education, with consequent rising expectations of an increasingly educated labour force, there has been a contradictory decrease in the skills and intellectual involvement required in the world of work. This paradox is highlighted by Braverman when he writes:

> On the one hand, it is emphasized that modern work, as a result of the scientific-technical revolution and 'automation', requires ever higher levels of education, training, and greater exercise of intelligence and mental effort in general. At the same time, a mounting dissatisfaction with the conditions of industrial and office labor appears to contradict this view.
>
> (Braverman 1974, pp. 3–4)

He concludes that the idea of the need for an increasingly skilled workforce is a myth. For instance, he shows that not only is work being increasingly fragmented and atomised, but that any vestige of decision making is being eradicated. Moreover, any distinction between skilled and unskilled labour is being transformed. Labour becomes more and more standardised and interchangeable with other units of labour. The result is that 'the more a worker comes close to being an "appendage of a machine", the more he or she ceases to be a human agent' (Giddens 1982a, pp. 44–5).

This contradiction has led to the 'problem' of over-education (see Rumberger 1981, 1984 and Freeman 1976). The response by educational administrators has been to introduce a plethora of transition schemes to try and reduce the tension between the schools and the workplace (see Watkins 1984b). These programs have a primary aim of reducing the expectations of young people who are leaving school with certificates which formerly would have guaranteed entry into a prestigious occupation. Students are now advised to match their academic credentials to the 'realities' of the workplace.

Another contradiction arises in education through the need for students to think critically and innovatively. Society needs such thinkers if it is to progress and if capital is to be successfully accumulated. But if such an approach to education is fostered, school leavers may be critical of the way the workplace is organised. As Apple puts it:

> Critical capacities are needed to keep our society dynamic; hence schools should teach students to be critical. Yet critical capacities can challenge capital as well . . . These ideological conflicts permeate our educational institutions and are worked out every day in them.
>
> (Apple 1982, p. 15)

The administration of schools is an ongoing working-out of tensions and strains arising from contradictions in the totality of our social world. While only a few of these contradictions have been alluded to, there are many others such as curriculum (Giroux 1981), gender (Apple 1983), social and age (Connell et al. 1982) and political (Watkins 1983b) contradictions which result in tensions leading to the production or reproduction of social institutions. For any adequate account of the administration of schools should take into account how human agents shape the structure of education while being themselves subject to the influence of their own historical chain of experiences and their own immediate interaction with current educational practices.

Conclusion

This monograph has suggested the development of a theory of human agency in order to gain a better understanding of the process of administration in education. In outlining the importance of human agency the deeply rooted historical and philosophical heritage of such an approach has been emphasised. In particular, the importance of Marx has been indicated, for, as Giddens has written, it is from his work that the problems of agency and structure can be clarified.

It was then argued that a theory of human agency in educational administration could be best understood by examining the recent writings of Dahrendorf, Bourdieu and Giddens. These writers not only examine the interrelationship of agency and structure but place it within a temporal and spatial context. This dialectical duality of structure was then extended to organisations and educational organisations through the works of writers such as Benson, Burrell, Morgan and Apple.

For educational administration this implies a shift of emphasis from a managerial perspective whereby people are acted on, rewarded, coerced, motivated, or led, to a position that sees human agency in educational organisations as part of an ongoing dialectic. The recognition that organisations are made up of knowing and active human beings would facilitate the introduction of a more democratic and autonomous educational structure which would reflect human agents acting in concerned, responsible and creative ways.

Current theory in educational administration does not explain the contradictions or negations inherent in organisational life. These can be explained only by replacing the passive, absorbing actor with a real human agent full of likes, dislikes, contradictions, obsessions and irrationalities. Human agency in this sense can be seen as interacting not with stable structures in equilibrium but with dynamic structures continually transforming in dialectic tension. A dialectical view of educational administration set in a temporal and spatial totality is needed not only to explain the transformation of organisations and how contradictions are transcended but also to understand the process through which human agency interacts with the constraining yet enabling structures of institutions.

In conclusion, a dialectical view of educational administration, through locating change in time and space, can add a degree of rich, almost tangible heritage which is derived from the siting of organisational cultures within the locale of their social and cultural history.

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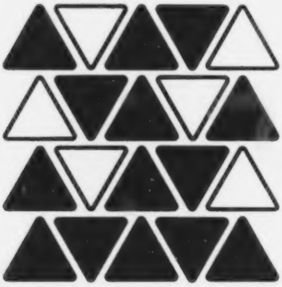
Readings



1

Structures, strategies and the habitus

Pierre Bourdieu

Three Modes of Theoretical Knowledge

The social world may be the object of three modes of theoretical knowledge, each of which implies a set of (usually tacit) anthropological theses. Although these modes of knowledge are, strictly speaking, in no way exclusive, and may be described as moments in a dialectical advance toward adequate knowledge, they have only one thing in common: the fact that they are opposed to practical knowledge. The knowledge we shall call *phenomenological* (or, to speak in terms of currently active schools, "ethnomethodological") sets out to make explicit the truth of primary experience of the social world, i.e., all that is inscribed in the relationship of *familiarity* with the familiar environment, the unquestioning apprehension of the social world which, by definition, does not reflect on itself and excludes the question of the conditions of its own possibility. The knowledge we shall term *objectivist* (of which structuralist hermeneutics is a particular case) constructs the objective relations (e g., economic or linguistic) which structure practice and representations of practice, i.e., in particular, primary knowledge, practical and tacit, of the familiar world. This construction presupposes a break with primary knowledge, whose tacitly assumed presuppositions give the social world its self-evident, natural character.[1] It is only on condition that it poses the question which the *doxic* experience of the social world excludes by definition—the question of the (particular) conditions making that experience possible—that objectivist knowledge can establish both the structures of the social world and the objective truth of primary experience as experience denied *explicit* knowledge of those structures.

Finally, it is only by means of a second break, which is needed in order to grasp the limits of objectivist knowledge—an inevitable moment in scientific knowledge—and to bring to light the theory of theory and the theory of practice inscribed (in its practical state) in this mode of knowledge, that we can integrate the gains from it into an adequate science of practices. The critical break with objectivist abstraction ensuing from inquiry into the conditions of possibility, and thereby, into the limits of the objective and objectifying standpoint which grasps practices from outside, as a *fait accompli,* instead of constructing their generative principle by situating itself within the very movement of their accomplishment, has no other aim than to make possible a science of the *dialectical* relations between the objective structures to which the objectivist mode of knowledge gives access and the structured dispositions within which those structures are actualized and which tend to reproduce them.

This questioning of objectivism is liable to be understood at first as a rehabilitation of subjectivism and to be merged with the critique that naive humanism levels at scientific objectification in the name of "lived experience" and the rights of "subjectivity." In reality, the theory of practice and of the practical mode of knowledge inherent in all practice which is the precondition for a rigorous science of practices carries out a new reversal of the problematic which objectivism has to construct in order to constitute the social world as a system of objective relations independent of individual consciousnesses and wills. Just as objectivist knowledge poses the question of the conditions of the possibility of primary experience, thereby revealing that this experience (or the phenomenological analysis of it) is fundamentally defined as *not* posing this question, so the theory of practice puts objectivist knowledge back on its feet by posing the question of the (theoretical and also social) conditions which make such knowledge possible. Because it produces its science of the social world against the implicit presuppositions of practical knowledge of the social world, objectivist knowledge is diverted from construction of the theory of practical knowledge of the social world, of which it at least produces the lack.

Objective analysis of practical apprehension of the familiar world is not a new form of sacrificial offering to the mysteries of subjectivity, but a means of exploring the limits of all objective exploration. It teaches us that we shall escape from the ritual either/or choice between objectivism and subjectivism in which the social sciences have so far allowed themselves to be trapped only if we are prepared to inquire into the mode of production and functioning of the practical mastery which makes possible both an objectively intelligible practice and also an objectively enchanted experience of that practice; more precisely, that we shall do so only if we subordinate all operations of scientific practice to a theory of practice and of practical knowledge (which has nothing to do with phenomenological reconstitution of lived experience), and inseparably from this, to a theory of the theoretical and social conditions of the possibility of objective apprehension—and thereby to a theory of the limits of this mode of knowledge.

A single example will suffice to show how this sort of third-order knowledge does not cancel out the gains from objectivist knowledge but conserves and transcends them by integrating the truth of practical experience and of the practical mode of knowledge which this learned knowledge had to be constructed against, that is to say, inseparably, the truth of all learned knowledge. It will be remembered that Lévi-Strauss, criticizing Mauss' "phenomenological" approach to gift exchange, makes a complete break with native experience and the native theory of that experience, positing that it is the exchange as a constructed object which "constitutes the primary phenomenon, and not the individual operations into which social life breaks it down,"[2] or, in other words, that the "mechanical laws" of the cycle of reciprocity are the unconscious principle of the obligation to give, the obligation to give in return, and the obligation to receive.[3] "Phenomenological" analysis and objectivist analysis bring to light two antagonistic principles of gift exchange: the gift as experienced, or, at least, meant to be experienced, and the gift as seen from outside. To stop short at the "objective" truth of the gift, i.e., the model, is to set aside the question of the relationship between so-called objective truth, i.e., that of the observer, and the truth that can scarcely be called subjective, since it represents the official definition of the subjective experience of the exchange; it is to ignore the fact that the agents practice as irreversible a sequence of actions that the observer constitutes as reversible. The observer's totalizing apprehension substitutes an objective structure fundamentally defined by its *reversibility* for an equally objectively *irreversible* succession of gifts which are not mechanically linked to the gifts they respond to or insistently call for: any really objective analysis of the exchange of gifts, words, challenges, or even women must allow for the fact that each of these inaugural acts may misfire, and that it receives its meaning, in any case, from the response it triggers off, even if the response is a failure to reply that retrospectively removes its intended meaning. To say that the meaning the gift has for the donor is recognized and consecrated only when the countergift has been made does not amount to restoring the structure of the cycle of reciprocity in different words. It means that even if reversibility is the objective truth of the discrete acts which ordinary experience knows in discrete form and calls gift exchanges, it is not the whole truth of a practice which could not exist if it were consciously perceived in accordance with the model. The temporal structure of gift exchange, which objectivism ignores, is what makes possible the coexistence of two opposing truths, which defines the full truth of the gift.

In every society it may be observed that, if it is not to constitute an insult, the countergift must be *deferred* and *different*, because the immediate return of an exactly identical object clearly amounts to a refusal (i.e., the return of the same object). Thus gift exchange is opposed on the one hand to *swapping*, which, like the theoretical model of the cycle of reciprocity, telescopes gift and countergift into the same instant, and on the other hand, to *lending*, in which the return of the loan is explicitly guaranteed by a juridical act and is thus *already accomplished* at the very moment of the drawing up of a contract capable of ensuring that the acts it prescribes are predictable and calculable. The difference and delay which the monothetic model obliterates must be brought into the model not, as Lévi-Strauss suggests, out of a "phenomenological" desire to restore the subjective experience of the practice of the exchange, but because the operation of gift exchange presupposes (individual and collective) misrecognition [*méconnaissance*] of the reality of the objective "mechanism" of the exchange, a reality which an immediate response brutally exposes: the *interval* between gift and countergift is what allows a pattern of exchange that is always liable to strike the observer and also the participants as *reversible*, i.e., both forced and interested, to be experienced as irreversible. "Overmuch eagerness to discharge one's obligations is a form of ingratitude," said La Rochefoucauld. To betray one's haste to be free of an obligation one has incurred, and thus to reveal too overtly one's desire to pay off services rendered or gifts received, so as to be quits, is to denounce the initial gift retrospectively as motivated by the intention of obliging one. It is all a question of style, which means in this case timing and choice of occasion, for the same act—giving, giving in return, offering one's services, paying a visit, etc.—can have completely different meanings at different times, coming as it may at the right or the wrong moment, while almost all important exchanges—gifts to the mother of a new-born child, or on the occasion of a wedding, etc.—have their own particular moments; the reason is that the lapse of time *separating* the gift from the counter gift is what authorizes the deliberate oversight, the collectively maintained and approved self-deception without which symbolic exchange, a fake circulation of fake coin, could not operate. If the system is to work, the agents must not be entirely unaware of the truth of their exchanges, which is made explicit in the anthropologist's model, while at the same time they must refuse to know and above all to recognize it. In short, everything takes place as if agents' practice, and in particular their manipulation of *time*, were organized exclusively with a view to concealing from themselves and from others the truth of their practice, which the anthropologist and his models bring to light simply by substituting the timeless model for a scheme which works itself out only in and through time.

To abolish the interval is also to abolish strategy. The period interposed, which must be neither too short (as is clearly seen in gift exchange) nor too long (especially in the exchange of revenge-murders), is quite the opposite of the inert gap of time, the time lag which the objectivist model makes of it. Until he has given in return, the receiver is "obliged," expected to show his gratitude toward his benefactor, or, at least, to have regard for him, to refrain from using against him all the weapons he otherwise might, to pull his punches, lest he be accused of ingratitude and stand condemned by "what people say," which is what gives his actions their social meaning. The man who has not avenged a murder, not bought back his land from a rival family, not married off his daughters in time, sees his capital diminished from day to day by passing time—unless he is capable of transforming forced delay into strategic deferment, the space of time into deliberate spacing out: putting off revenge or the return of a gift can be a way of keeping one's partner-opponent in the dark about one's intentions; the moment for the comeback becomes impossible to pinpoint, like the really evil moment in the ill-omened periods of the ritual calendar, just before the upturn. After a certain point lack of response ceases to be an oversight and becomes disdainful refusal. Delay is also a way of exacting from him the deferential conduct that is required as long as relations are not broken off. It is understandable within this logic that a man whose daughter is asked for in marriage should feel he has to reply as soon as possible if the answer is no, lest he seem to be taking advantage of the situation, and offend the suitor, whereas if he intends to say yes, he may put off the reply for as long as he likes, so as to make the most of the temporary advantage of his position, which he will lose as soon as he gives his consent. Everything takes place as if the ritualization of interactions had the paradoxical effect of giving time its full social efficacy, never more potent than when nothing *but* time is going on. "Time," we say, "is on his side"; time can also work against one. In other words, time derives its efficacy from the state of the structure of relations within which it comes into play; which does not imply that the model of that structure can leave it out of account. When the unfolding of the action is heavily ritualized, as in the dialectic of offense and vengeance, there is still room for strategies which consist of playing on the time, or rather the *tempo*, of the action, by delaying revenge so as to prolong the threat of revenge. And this is true, *a fortiori*, of all the less strictly regulated occasions which offer unlimited scope for strategies exploiting the possibilities offered by manipulation of the tempo of the action—holding back or putting off, maintaining suspense or expectation, or on the other hand, hurrying, hustling, surprising, and stealing a march, not to mention the art of ostentatiously giving time ("devoting one's time to someone") or withholding it ("no time to spare"). We know, for example, how much advantage the holder of a transmissible power can derive from the art of delaying transmission and keeping others in the dark as to his ultimate intentions. Then there are all the strategies intended simply to neutralize the action of time and ensure the continuity of interpersonal relations, drawing the continuous out of the discontinuous, as mathematicians do, through infinite multiplication of the infinitely small, in the form, for example, of the "little presents" said to "keep friendship going" ("0 present—*thunticht*—you won't make me rich but you are the bond of friendship").

Little presents, which are halfway between "gratuitous" gifts (*elma'tar*, unreturned gift, "like a mother's milk," or *thikchi*, a thing given without recompense) and the most rigorously "forced" gifts, must be of modest value and hence easy to give and easy to match; but they must be *frequent*, and in a sense continuous, which implies that they must function within the logic of "surprises" or "kind thoughts" rather than according to the mechanisms of ritual. These presents intended to maintain the everday order of social intercourse almost always consist of a dish of cooked food, couscous (with a piece of cheese, when they mark a cow's first milk) and follow the course of minor family celebrations—the third or seventh day after birth, a baby's first tooth or first steps, a boy's first haircut, first visit to the market or first fast; linked to events in the life cycle of men or the earth, they involve those wishing to *impart* their joy, and those invited to *take part* in that joy, in what is nothing less than a fertility rite: when the dish which contained the present is taken back, it always contains, "for good luck" (*el fal*), what is sometimes called *thiririth* (from *er*, to give back), that is to say, a little corn, a little semolina (never barley, a female plant and symbol of fragility), or perferably, some dried vegetables, chick peas, lentils, etc., called *ajedjig* "flower," given "so that the boy (the reason for the exchange) will flourish," so he will grow tall and be fruitful. These ordinary gifts (which include some of those they call *tharzefth*, which are visiting-presents) are sharply opposed to extraordinary gifts, *lkhir* or *lehna*, given for the major festivals called *thimeghriwin* (sing. *thameghra*)—weddings, births, and circumcisions—and *a fortiori* to *lw'ada*, the obligatory gift to a saint. And indeed, the little gifts between relatives and friends are opposed to the present of money and eggs which is given by affines remote both in space and genealogy, and also in time—since they are seen only intermittently, on the "great occasions"—and whose importance and solemnity make them a sort of controlled challenge in the same way that marriages within the lineage or neighborhood, so frequent and so closely woven into the fabric of ordinary exchanges that they pass unnoticed, are opposed to the more prestigious but infinitely more hazardous extraordinary marriages between different villages or tribes, sometimes intended to set the seal on alliances or reconciliations and always marked by solemn ceremonies.

This takes us a long way from the objectivist model of the mechanical interlocking of preregulated actions that is commonly associated with the notion of ritual: only a virtuoso with a perfect command of his "art of living" can play on all the resources inherent in the ambiguities and uncertainties of behavior and situation in order to produce the actions appropriate to each case, to do that of which people will say "There was nothing else to be done," and do it the right way. We are a long way, too, from norms and rules: doubtless there are slips, mistakes, and moments of clumsiness to be observed here as elsewhere; and also grammarians of decorum able to state (and elegantly, too) what it is right to do and say, but never presuming to encompass in a catalogue of recurrent situations and appropriate conduct, still less in a fatalistic model, the "art" of the *necessary improvisation* which defines excellence.

To restore to practice its practical truth, we must therefore reintroduce time into the theoretical representation of a practice which, being temporally structured, is intrinsically defined by its *tempo*. The generative, organizing scheme which gives a discussion its unity or an improvised speech its "argument," and attain conscious expression in order to work itself out, is an often imprecise but systematic principle of selection and realization, tending, through steadily directed adjustments and corrections, to eliminate accidents when they can be put to use, and to conserve even fortuitous successes. It is therefore practice, in its most specific aspect, which is annihilated when the scheme is identified with the model: retrospective necessity becomes prospective necessity, the product a project; and things which have happened, and can no longer not happen, become the irresistible future of the acts which made them happen. This amounts to positing, with Diodorus, that if it is true to say of a thing that it will be, then it must one day be true to say that it is, or, in the words of another paradox, that "Today is tomorrow, because yesterday tomorrow was today." All experience of practice contradicts these paradoxes, and affirms that cycles of reciprocity are not the irresistible gearing of obligatory practices found only in ancient tragedy: a gift may remain unrequited, if it meets with ingratitude; it may be spurned as an insult. Once the possiblility is admitted that the "mechanical law" of the "cycle of reciprocity" may not apply, the whole logic of practice is transformed. Even in cases in which the agents' habitus are perfectly harmonized and the interlocking of actions and reactions is totally predictable *from outside*, uncertainty remains as to the outcome of the interaction as long as the sequence has not been completed: the passage from the highest probability to absolute certainty is a qualitative leap which is not proportionate to the numerical gap. This uncertainty, which finds its objective basis in the probabilist logic of social laws, is sufficient to modify not only the experience of practice (which phenomenological analysis describes, being more attentive than objectivism to the temporality of action) but practice itself, in giving an objective foundation to strategies aimed at avoiding the most probable outcome.

To substitute *strategy* for the *rule* is to reintroduce time, with its rhythm, its orientation, its irreversibility. Science has a time which is not that of practice. For the analyst, time no longer counts: not only because—as has often been repeated since Max Weber—arriving *post festum*, he cannot be in any uncertainty as to what may happen, but also because he has the time to totalize, i.e., to overcome the effects of time. Scientific practice is so "detemporalized" that it tends to exclude even the idea of what it excludes: because science is possible only in a relation to time which is opposed to that of practice, it tends to ignore time and, in doing so, to reify practices. (Which is to say, once again, that epistemological reflection is constitutive of scientific practice itself: in order to understand what practice is—and in particular the properties it owes to the fact that it unfolds in time—it is therefore necessary to know what science is—and in particular what is implied in the specific temporality of scientific practice.) The detemporalizing effect (visible in the synoptic apprehension that diagrams make possible) that science produces when it forgets the transformation it imposes on practices inscribed in the current of time, i.e., detotalized, simply by totalizing them, is never more pernicious than when exerted on practices defined by the fact that their temporal structure, direction, and rhythm are constitutive of their meaning.

Structures, Practice and the Habitus

Methodological objectivism, a necessary moment in all research, by the break with primary experience and the construction of objective relations which it accomplishes, demands its own supersession. In order to escape the *realism of the structure,* which hypostatizes systems of objective relations by converting them into totalities already constituted outside of individual history and group history, it is necessary to pass from the *opus operatum* to the *modus operandi,* from statistical regularity or algebraic structure to the principle of the production of this observed order, and to construct the theory of practice, or, more precisely, the theory of the mode of generation of practices, which is the precondition for establishing an experimental science of the *dialectic of the internalization of externality and the externalization of internality,* or more simply, of incorporation and objectification.

The structures constitutive of a particular type of environment (e.g., the material conditons of existence characteristic of a class condition) produce *habitus,* systems of durable, transposable *dispositions,*[4] structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles of the generation and structuring of practices and representations which can be objectively "regulated" and "regular" without in any way being the product of obedience to rules, objectively adapted to their goals without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary to attain them and, being all this, collectively orchestrated without being the product of the orchestrating action of a conductor.

Even when they appear as the realization of the explicity, and explicitly stated, purposes of a project or plan, the practices produced by the habitus, as the strategy-generating principle enabling agents to cope with unforeseen and ever-changing situations, are only apparently determined by the future. If they seem determined by anticipation of their own consequences, thereby encouraging the finalist illusion, the fact is that, always tending to reproduce the objective structures of which they are the product, they are determined by the past conditions which have produced the principle of their production, that is, by the actual outcome of identical or interchangeable past practices, which coincides with their own outcome to the extent (*and only to the extent*) that the objective structures of which they are the product are prolonged in the structures within which they function. Thus, for example, in the interaction between two agents or groups of agents endowed with the same habitus (say A and B), everything takes place as if the actions of each of them (say, a_1 for A) were organized in relation to the reactions they call forth from any agent possessing the same habitus (say, b_1, B's reaction to a_1) so that they objectively imply anticipation of the reaction which these reactions in turn call forth (say a_2, the reaction to b_1). But the teleological description according to which each action has the purpose of making possible the reaction to the reaction it arouses (individual A performing action a_1, e.g., a gift or challenge, in order to make individual B produce b_1, a countergift or riposte, so as to be able to perform action a_2, a stepped-up gift or challenge) is quite as naive as the mechanistic description which presents the action and the riposte as moments in a sequence of programmed actions produced by a mechanical apparatus. The habitus is the source of these series of moves which are objectively organized as strategies without being the product of a genuine strategic intention—which would presuppose at least that they are perceived as one strategy among other possible strategies.[5]

It is necessary to abandon all theories which explicitly or implicitly treat practice as a mechanical reaction, directly determined by the antecedent conditions and entirely reducible to the mechanical functioning of preestablished assemblies, "models" or "roles"—which one would, moreover, have to postulate in infinite number, like the chance configurations of stimuli capable of triggering them from outside, thereby condemning oneself to the grandiose and desperate undertaking of the anthropologist, armed with fine positivist courage, who recorded 480 elementary units of behavior in twenty minutes' observation of his wife in the kitchen. But rejection of mechanistic theories in no way implies that, in accordance with another obligatory option, we should bestow on some creative free will the willful power to constitute, on the instant, the meaning of the situation by projecting the ends aiming at its transformation, and that we should reduce the objective intentions and constituted significations of actions and works to the conscious and deliberate intentions of their authors.

NOTES

1. Objectivism posits that immediate communication is possible if and only if the agents are objectively harmonized so as to associate the same meaning with the same sign (utterance, practice, or work), or, to put it another way, so as to refer in their coding and decoding operations, i.e., in their practices and interpretations, to one and the same system of constant relations, independent of individual consciousnesses and wills and irreducible to their *execution* practices or works (e.g., Saussurian *"langue"* as code or cipher). In so doing, objectivist analysis does not, strictly speaking, contradict phenomenological analysis of primary experience of the social world, and of the immediate comprehension of the utterances, acts, or works of others. It merely defines the limits of its validity by establishing the particular conditions within which it is possible, conditions which phenomenological analysis ignores.

2. See Claude Lévi-Strauss, "Introduction à l'oeuvre de Marcel Mauss," in *Sociologie et anthropologie* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1950), p. xxxviii.

3. *Ibid.*, p. xxxvi.

4. The word *disposition* seems particularly suited to express what is covered by the concept of *habitus* (defined as a system of dispositions). It expresses first the *result of an organizing action* with a meaning close to that of words such as structure; it also designates a way of being, a *habitual state* (especially of the body) and, in particular, a *predisposition, tendency, propensity* or *inclination*. [The semantic cluster of "disposition" is rather wider in French than in English, but as this note—translated literally—shows, the equivalence is adequate--Trans.]

5. The most profitable strategies are usually those produced, on the hither side of all calculation and in the illusion of the most "authentic" sincerity, by a habitus objectively fitted to the objective structures. These strategies without strategic calculation procure an important secondary advantage for those who can scarcely be called their authors—the social approval accruing from apparent disinterestedness.

Source: P. Bourdieu, 'Structures, strategies and the habitus', in C. C. Lemert (ed.) *French Sociology: Rupture and Renewal since 1968*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1981, pp. 86-96.

2

Power, the dialectic of control and class structuration

Anthony Giddens

In this paper I shall seek to draw some connections between certain general problems of social theory and the analysis of class structure in capitalist societies. In a number of recent publications I have elaborated what I call the *theory of structuration* as a schema for coping with some of the most deeply embedded dilemmas of social theory.[1] The theory of structuration is based upon the following claims: that social theory (which I take to be relevant equally to each of the social scientific disciplines: sociology, anthropology, psychology and economics, as well as to history) should incorporate an understanding of human behaviour as *action;* that such an understanding has to be made compatible with a focus upon the *structural components* of social institutions or societies; and that notions of *power* and *domination* are logically, not just contingently, associated with the concepts of action and structure as I conceptualise them. I shall not be concerned to substantiate these claims in this discussion, but shall attempt rather to trace out a few of their implications for issues that I take to be important to class analysis.

Action, power and the concept of the dialectic of control

By emphasising that (the vast bulk of) human behaviour has to be treated as action, I mean principally two things. One I shall call the theorem of 'knowledgeability'; the second, that of 'capability'. Embodying a conception of action within social theory involves treating the human being as a knowledgeable and capable agent. By saying that human beings are knowledgeable agents, I mean that all of us know a great deal about why we behave as we do, and about the social conventions relevant to that behaviour. Philosophers are prone to talk of such knowledgeability in terms of the 'reasons' that individuals have for their conduct. However, this can be misleading, for it suggests that human conduct involves a string of discrete reasons aggregated together: and that every act has some definite reason attached to it. Rather than suggesting any such implication, I prefer to speak of the 'rationalisation' of human conduct as an inherent feature of human behaviour. I do not refer here to the Weberian sense of 'rationalisation', or to the Freudian: by the rationalisation of conduct I mean that human agents chronically, but for the most part tacitly, 'keep in touch' with the grounds of their activity, as a routine element of that activity. This 'reflexive self-monitoring' of activity is an integral element of all human social encounters. The knowledgeability of human subjects, it is important to stress, is not limited to what people can *say*, if asked, about why they act as they do. This is the force of the adverb 'tacitly' in the sentence above. The specific contribution of phenomenological approaches to social theory has been to make clear that tacit awareness of conventions, anchored in, yet making possible the continuity of, social practices, is fundamental to the knowledgeability of human agents. Such tacit awareness is, in Wittgenstein's terms, knowledge of 'how to go on' in the contexts of practical day-to-day life: it is what I call 'practical consciousness'.[2]

By speaking of human agents as 'capable', I mean to refer to the philosophical theorem that action involves the possibility of 'doing otherwise'. Although such a notion is notoriously difficult to elucidate I take it to be an essential component of a theory of action.[3] To be able to 'do otherwise' is to be able to make a difference in the world, to influence a pre-existing course of events (either through actual behaviour or through refraining). I want to argue that this implies that the concept of action is logically involved with that of power: for power, in its broadest sense, is precisely the capability of 'making a difference' to a course of events. This is a theme I shall pursue at some length below. For the moment it is important to insist that action analysis must be complemented by institutional analysis in social theory; we have to acknowledge that the knowledgeability/capability of human agents is always *bounded*, or constrained by elements of the institutional contexts in which their action takes place. But it is a major error to treat the structural features of social systems as coterminous with such bounds. This is the characteristic view that has supported the dualism between action approaches and structural approaches, and that has been so entrenched in traditionally established forms of social theory. The structural properties of social systems should rather be seen as both constraining and enabling, in respect of human action; and the traditional dualism between action and structure has to be reinterpreted as a duality, in which structure is both the medium and outcome of knowledgeably sustained social practices. Again, I have detailed these ideas elsewhere[4]

Let me pursue here the theme of the relation between action and power. I wish to distinguish two aspects of this issue: (1) the general implications of the logical relation between agency and power; (2) the mode in which power relations may be analysed as a chronically reproduced feature of social systems.

Of (1) we can say the following: to be a human agent is to have power, to be able to 'make a difference' in the world. This has direct consequences for (2), because it follows that, in any relationship which may be involved in a social system, the most seemingly 'powerless' individuals are able to mobilise resources whereby they carve out 'spaces of control' in respect of their day-to-day lives and in respect of the activities of the more powerful. One way of examining (1) is to consider instances which lie on the margins of action. These both help to explicate what it means to be an agent, and show how intimately this is related to power. But such examples also serve to demonstrate how closely (1) connects to (2), a connection which, I shall suggest, can best be handled by a concept of what I shall call the 'dialectic of control'.

Consider first an instance where A is injected with a drug by B, rendering A unconscious and immobile. Such a case clearly lies outside the scope of the agency/power relation: A ceases to be an agent, and while B potentially has power over A's fate, A has been rendered powerless. This apparently banal example is not without interest, however. If B can do more or less what he or she desires with A's body, including ending A's life altogether, it may appear that B's power over A is absolute or unconditional. And so in a sense it is, for A is incapable of resisting. Complete though it may be in one aspect, it is very limited in others. For by killing or immobilising A, B is necessarily deprived of whatever goods or services A might render within a continuing social relationship. The threat to do violence to another may be very often a major sanction helping to enforce modes of domination, but the actual destruction of one agent by another can hardly be regarded as the type case of the use of social power.

Consider a second example that one might suppose to be near the margins of whether or not a person remains an agent: someone in solitary confinement in a prison. Now it is clear that in such an instance the person does retain the capability of 'making a difference'. Such a capability includes not just the chance to invent modes of occupying the mind in circumstances of extreme tedium; the solitary prisoner normally possesses at least some resources that can be brought to bear against his or her captors. 'Dirty protests' or hunger strikes in Northern Ireland are familiar illustrations. There are many ways in which the seemingly powerless, in particular contexts, may be able to influence the activities of those who appear to hold complete power over them; or in which the weak are able to mobilise resources against the strong. There are few social relations, of course, which are as markedly imbalanced in respect of power as that between prisoners in solitary confinement and their jailors. But such examples serve to highlight the points I have in mind. These can be stated as follows. Anyone who participates in a social relationship, forming part of a social system produced and reproduced by its constituent actors over time, necessarily sustains some control over the character of that relationship or system. Power relations in social systems can be regarded as relations of autonomy and dependence; but no matter how imbalanced they may be in terms of power, actors in subordinate positions are never wholly dependent, and are often very adept at converting whatever resources they possess into some degree of control over the conditions of reproduction of the system. In all social systems there is a *dialectic of control*, such that there are normally continually shifting balances of resources, altering the overall distribution of power. While it is always an empirical question just what power relations pertain within a social system, the agency/power connection, as a connection of logical entailment, means that an agent who does not participate in the dialectic of control *ipso facto* ceases to *be* an agent.

I believe it true to say that in large areas of the social sciences – particularly (but not exclusively) in those dominated either by a general 'objectivist' position or more specifically by functionalism or by structuralism – human beings are not treated as knowledgeable, capable agents. This is perhaps most notoriously the case with Althusser's 'structuralist Marxism', and in the writings of those influenced by it: human agents are mere 'bearers of modes of production'. But, as I have argued elsewhere, a theory of action is also lacking in the functionalist sociology of Talcott Parsons, in spite of Parsons's labelling of his theoretical scheme as 'the action frame of reference'. Although Parsons may have moved towards a more objectivist stance in his later writings, as is often asserted, this was not a movement away from the concept of action as I have proposed it should be understood; for such a concept was not there in the first place. Garfinkel is quite right to say that in Parsons's theory human beings appear as 'cultural dopes', as impelled by 'internalised cultural values' that govern their activity.[5]

In the subsequent sections of the paper, I want to try to show that, however abstract they may appear, these general considerations have direct consequences for quite fundamental issues of class analysis. I shall not concern myself with either Althusser or Parsons, but rather with two authors, one 'classic' and one more recent, whose works have made a strong imprint upon the study of classes. First, Weber's discussion of the nature of bureaucratic organisation, and its association with the expansion of capitalism. The second is Braverman's investigation of the division of labour in his by now very well-known book, *Labor and Monopoly Capital*.[6] Although Weber's views are in certain key respects explicitly anti-Marxist, while Braverman claims to defend a Marxist standpoint, there are some major similarities between the conclusions which each author tends to reach. These similarities – or so I shall claim – derive in some substantial part from deficiencies which can be analysed in terms of the concept of the dialectic of control.

Weber: bureaucracy and capitalism

Marx and Weber are widely regarded as the two most pre-eminent contributors to general problems of class analysis. It is sometimes supposed that Weber's main divergence from Marx consists in expanding upon, and modifying, Marx's views by adding the concept of 'status group' or *Stand*, and that of 'party' to that of 'class'. Others point out that, by apparently identifying the notion of class with market relations, Weber fails to pursue the Marxian theme that class divisions are founded in the relations of production. But each of these comparisons is relatively superficial. Much more significant are the differences between Weber's conception of capitalism and that of Marx; the former's interpretation of bureaucratisation, of course, plays a pivotal role in these differences. When Marx wrote about 'bureaucracy' (in, for example, his early critical discussions of Hegel), he used the term in its traditional sense, to refer to the administrative apparatus of government. One of Weber's major theoretical innovations was to provide a compelling rationale for extending the notions of 'bureaucracy' and 'bureaucratisation' to a whole variety of social organisations. Lying behind this terminological difference, of course, is Weber's conviction that the 'steel-hard cage' of rational-legal organisation is a necessary feature of the expansion of capitalism – and that the bars of the cage would become even more confining were capitalism to be replaced by socialism.

Weber's portrayal of bureaucracy and bureaucratisation is so well known that it is necessary to give no more than the briefest presentation of it here. Weber sometimes uses the term 'bureaucracy' in the narrow sense I mentioned above; and he often also uses it as a general descriptive type (when talking of the traditional Chinese bureaucracy, etc.). But his most important formulation is as an 'ideal type': the more an organisation conforms to the features of the ideal type, the more 'bureaucratised' it can be said to be. The ideal type of bureaucratic organisation involves the following principal features: a formally delimited hierarchy, with the duties of distinct 'offices' being specified by written rules; staffing by means of full-time, salaried officials; and selection and allocation of officials by impersonal criteria, on the basis of 'qualifications'. 'Experience tends universally to show', Weber avers, that 'the purely bureaucratic type of administrative organisation . . . is, from a purely technical point of view, capable of attaining the highest degree of efficiency and is in this sense formally the most rational known means of exercising authority over human beings. It is superior to any other form in precision, in stability, in the stringency of its discipline, and in its reliability.'[7] But the 'technical effectiveness' of bureaucracy exacts a heavy price. It is the source of the alienated character of bureaucratic tasks. Weber's talk of 'precision', 'stability' and 'reliability' points to the direct connection between bureaucracy and mechanisation that he sometimes makes quite explicit. Bureaucracy, he says, is a 'human machine': the formal rationality of technique applies with equal relevance to human social organisation as to the control of the material world. A vital corollary to all this is the theme that, the more an organisation approaches the ideal type, the more it is the case that power becomes centralised in the hands of those at the apex of the organisation. The expropriation of the worker from control of the means of production (or 'the means of administration') is a process that inevitably and irreversibly accompanies the expansion of bureaucratisation. Although Weber did not coin the phrase 'the iron law of oligarchy', his ideas strongly influenced Michels and there is no doubt that the theorem 'bureaucracy means oligarchy' is fundamental to his writings.

Weber's specification of bureaucracy as an ideal type creates difficulties in assessing his views, since it seems to offer a mode of deflecting criticism. For if it is proposed that his conception of bureaucracy does not in fact provide a wholly valid or useful interpretation of the phenomena with which it is concerned, the response can be made that, as it is an ideal type, one should feel no particular qualms if it does not conform to social reality. Weber adds fuel to such a rejoinder when he comments that ideal types 'do not contain hypotheses', that they are no more than a 'one-sided accentuation' of reality.[8] I do not have the space here to discuss the notion of ideal types; but however it may be most aptly described, Weber's conception of bureaucracy certainly does contain hypotheses (concerning technical effectiveness, etc.) that can be adjudged in terms of how well they cope with the subject-matter they relate to.

Marxists have quite rightly regarded Weber's sombre projection of an increasingly bureaucratised social world – in which the alienation that Marx saw as involved for the wage-worker in the capitalist labour-process would become the ineluctable lot of everyone – as constituting a fundamental challenge to Marx's ideas. Marxist writers have attacked Weber's conceptions of capitalism and bureaucracy from various different angles. But most such attacks have converged upon a single standpoint: the traits that Weber attributed to an overall process of 'bureaucratisation' are in fact the specific outcome of capitalist class domination, and hence will be transcended with the advent of socialism.

I do not want to say that these critical views are without foundation, and shall later argue that Braverman's work contributes in an important fashion to them; but I do think they are seriously limited because they characteristically accept *too much* of what Weber has to say about the nature and consequences of bureaucratisation. That is to say, the common tendency among Weber's Marxist critics is to accept the essential elements of Weber's characterisation of bureaucracy, while declaring bureaucratic domination to be a specific outcome of the class system of capitalism. But Weber's conception of bureaucracy has to be confronted in a more direct way than this. There are four respects (among others which I shall not discuss here) in which the overall interpretation of bureaucracy that Weber offered has major weaknesses.

1. Weber seeks to draw a generalised contrast (in an 'ideal-typical' manner) between traditional and bureaucratic organisations, in which the 'steel-hard cage' of the latter denies to individuals the autonomy and spontaneity of behaviour possible in a non-bureaucratised social world. But this 'philosophy of history'[9] is surely not particularly convincing. Some forms of traditional organisation have scarcely allowed much autonomy of conduct to their members: not in spite of, but because of their nature as small, localised community forms. One can

readily detect in Weber's writing here the influence of a Romanticism that also resonates through Tönnies's opposition between *Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft*.[10] In this regard, Weber's approach can usefully be balanced by Durkheim in the latter's discussion of so-called 'mechanical solidarity'.[11] Although communities dominated by mechanical solidarity offer the person a secure moral haven, the individual is nonetheless subject to what Durkheim refers to as the 'tyranny of the group'. The range of possible activities of the individual is severely curtailed by the norms of the collectivity, backed by 'repressive' sanctions. I am no more persuaded by Durkheim's account of the consequences of the expansion of the division of labour than I am by Weber's interpretation of bureaucratisation; but I think that the former author is correct in claiming that the movement away from *gemeinschaftlich* forms of organisation towards more large-scale, diversified ones, is frequently in some part a liberating phenomenon.

2. The 'iron law of oligarchy' is not a law at all; or rather it is a spurious one. The 'law' states that the increasing centralisation or coordination of activities that accompanies bureaucratisation necessarily means that power becomes more and more consolidated in the hands of a minority in an organisation. Stated as a universal tendency, however, such is simply not the case. It is easy enough to demonstrate this. The British economy today is considerably more highly centralised than was the case fifty years ago. But the very fact of such increased centralisation entails that certain nominally subordinate groupings of workers actually have more power now than they were able to wield previously. This is true, for example, of workers in public utilities, in the oil industry, etc. It is precisely *because* of the increased interdependence of everyone in a strongly centralised economic order that strategically placed categories of workers are able, through the threat of withdrawal of their labour, to increase their power. What applies within the economy, or the state as a whole, applies in more specific organisations also. An excellent illustration of this is work on a production line. What could be a better example of a highly 'formally rational' system, in which human beings and machines are strictly coordinated with one another? But again the strongly coordinated nature of such a production process, while it undeniably reduces labour to dull, repetitive tasks, in some respects increases rather than limits the power of workers involved in it. For a highly centralised production process tends to be much more vulnerable to disruption by small groups of workers than one in which labour tasks are less interdependent.

I do not mean to suggest by these illustrations that the centralisation involved in bureaucratisation leads to the opposite situation to that suggested by the 'iron law of oligarchy': i.e. that more centralisation entails the greater dependence of those in formal positions of authority upon their subordinates, and hence that the result is the diffusion of power downwards. Such a conclusion would, of course, be more fatuous than the famous 'iron law' itself. What I do mean to say is that there is no simple movement of power 'upwards' or 'downwards' with increasing bureaucratisation; normally there are various kinds of possible 'trade-offs' in the resources which can be actualised by groupings at different levels of an organisation.

3. The implications of point (2) are that bureaucratic organisations do not characteristically look much like Weber presents them in his 'ideal type'. As I have argued above, it is useless to respond to this by replying that ideal types by definition only approximate more or less closely to reality; the point at issue is how far Weber's formulation provides an apposite model for analysing contemporary forms of social organisation. And in fact there is good reason to suppose that, in modern bureaucratic systems, those in nominally subordinate positions usually have considerably greater control over the nature of their labour task than Weber allows. Although some of the work by Blau and others on the significance of 'informal relations' within bureaucratic hierarchies is worth mentioning here,[12] more directly relevant is that of Crozier.[13] As Crozier shows, the social (and often physical) distance between offices allows spaces of potential control for subordinates that are not available in smaller, more traditional communities. A formal authority system of an organisation that approaches the characteristics of Weber's 'ideal type', in fact, can often be more successfully circumvented or manipulated by subordinates than one in which those traits are less developed.[14] No doubt Weber was right to underscore the importance of written rules as a feature of bureaucracy. But the formal codification of procedures rarely conforms to actual practice; the 'rule-book' may be subject to divergent interpretations, and hence can be a focus for conflicts which subordinates may turn to their own advantage. The irony of the idea of 'working to rule' is certainly not lost upon those who invoke the practice as a strategy in the dialectic of control.

4. The above considerations place seriously in question Weber's theorem that the 'purely bureaucratic' type of organisation is the most 'formally rational' mode of exercising authority over human beings. This theorem is so important to Weber's association of bureaucracy with capitalism, and to his critique of socialism, that it is worthwhile

emphasising the point rather strongly. For it is the basis of Weber's cultural pessimism, and of his diagnosis of an antithesis between bureaucracy and democracy. Bureaucratic domination, in which the mass of the population are largely powerless to influence the decisions that govern the course of their day-to-day lives, is quite literally an irresistible force that sweeps us all along. Attempts to stem the tide merely succeed in giving it a greater force. But such pessimism is misplaced if Weber's characterisation of the main elements of bureaucracy is a misleading one. This should not in any way be taken to imply that the sorts of problems Weber connected to bureaucratic domination can be ignored. Quite the contrary. They remain of fundamental significance: but when we attempt to tackle them, on either a sociological or a political level, we have to disencumber ourselves from a good deal of what has become received Weberian wisdom.

How does such a critique of Weber's conception of bureaucracy connect with the methodological arguments I made in the opening section of the paper? For Weber was not by any streak of the imagination an 'objectivist'; rather, he stressed the 'subjective meaning' of human conduct as integral to social analysis. Without pursuing this issue in any detail, it can be said that, in respect of bureaucratic organisation, Weber associated 'meaning' with *legitimacy*. Consequently his account of bureaucracy is very much written 'from the top'; the ideal type of bureaucratic organisation is heavily weighted towards how the 'legitimate order of a rational-legal form' is sustained.

Braverman: class domination and capitalism

Braverman writes as a Marxist, and the starting-point of his analysis of capitalistic organisations is the sale of labour power as a commodity. In the sale of their labour power to the capitalist, workers cede control of the labour process; capitalists, for their part, seek to consolidate this control through 'management'. Workers have to be 'managed' without employers being able to rely either upon the moral ties of fealty involved in feudal class relations, or upon the use of physical force to make workers obey; their only real sanction is the economic constraint of the need of workers to find paid employment in order to make a living. The crux of Braverman's thesis is that managerial control is obtained above all via the effects of the division of labour. It is mistaken, Braverman argues, to talk about the division of labour in general. The 'social division of labour', which is found in all societies, has to be clearly distinguished from the 'technical division of labour', which is specific to capitalism. While the social division of labour involves the separation of tasks devoted to the making of whole products, the technical division of labour fragments the labour task into repetitive operations carried out by different individuals. The expansion of the technical division of labour, in Braverman's view, is the most basic element in extending managerial control over labour, because knowledge of and command over the labour process are thereby progressively 'expropriated' from workers. Braverman lays a great deal of stress upon the contribution of Taylorism, or 'scientific management', to this process. In Taylorism the operations carried out by the worker are integrated into the technical design of production as a whole. 'Scientific management' may seem in most countries to have made only a limited inroad into industry, and to have been generally superseded by the 'human relations' approach of Elton Mayo and his associates in the United States.[15] But Braverman claims that the impact of the 'human relations' view has been of relatively marginal significance. Taylorism serves as the chief set of organising principles of capitalist production.

Braverman's analysis, in my opinion, stands as a major corrective to some of the elements of Weber's account of bureaucratisation. Braverman shows that the rationality of technique in modern industrial enterprise is not neutral in respect of class domination. It would be difficult to exaggerate the significance of this. For if Braverman's argument is correct, industrial technique embodies the capital/wage-labour relation in its very form. Class domination appears as the absent centre of the linkage Weber drew between the rationality of technique and the rationality of the (formally) most 'technically effective' type of organisation, bureaucracy. It would follow that bureaucratic domination, and the concomitant powerlessness of workers, are not inevitable features of contemporary organisations; the transformation of the class relations incorporated within the 'technical division of labour' could in principle furnish the basis for the democratic reorganisation of the labour process. Braverman's work should therefore provide for a more optimistic assessment of the possibilities of unlocking Weber's 'steel-hard cage' than Weber's own gloomy vision of the future allows for. In fact, however, the process of the sieving-off of control of the labour process that Braverman describes appears to have just the same inevitable, irreversible character about it as the processes of bureaucratisation portrayed by Weber. The factors responsible for this, I want to argue, do in some respects have similarities to the shortcomings I have pointed to in Weber's treatment of bureaucracy; but this time they are very closely connected to an 'objectivist' methodological position that Braverman declaredly embraces towards the beginning of his book.

Labor and Monopoly Capital, he claims, is only concerned with the ' "objective" content of class', and not with the ' "subjective will" '.[16] The result is a work which, notwithstanding its self-professed Marxist standpoint, certainly drastically underestimates the knowledgeability and the capability of workers faced with a range of management imperatives. Braverman is mistaken to say that his work is unconcerned with 'subjective will': the 'subjective will' of *management*, as expressed in Taylorist strategies of control, is more than adequately represented in the book. What is lacking is an adequate discussion of the reactions of workers, as themselves knowledgeable and capable agents, to the technical division of labour and to Taylorism. Braverman bases his severance of the 'objective' from the 'subjective' components of class upon Marx's famous distinction between a class 'in itself' and a class 'for itself'. But it is important to see that this distinction conceals a possible ambiguity. For the differentiation could be taken to imply that 'class consciousness' can be equated with class 'for itself': and that therefore the 'objective' features of class can be examined without reference to consciousness (discursive or practical). This is evidently mistaken. All class relations obviously involve the conscious activity of human agents. But this is different from groups of individuals being conscious of being members of the same class, of having common class interests, and so on.[17] It is quite possible to conceive of circumstances in which individuals are not only not cognisant of being in a common class situation, but where they may actively deny the existence of classes – and where their attitudes and ideas can nevertheless be explained in terms of class relationships. Such is characteristically the case, as I have argued elsewhere,[18] with certain categories of white-collar workers.

Braverman's surprising disinclination to treat workers as knowledgeable and capable agents seriously compromises the validity of some of his conclusions. The implications of Braverman's analysis, which in emphasising the class character of managerial control begins from different premises to those of Weber, appear every bit as pessimistic as those of that author. For although Braverman's study is an explicitly Marxist one, there is no indication at all that the working class is likely to rise against its oppressors, or even that workers are able in some part to stem the advance of the processes that rob them of control over their labour. On the contrary, the spread of deskilling, and the sieving-off of control over the labour task from the worker, appear to have much the same implacable force about them as the advance of bureaucracy depicted by Weber.

The revolution may be as far off as ever; but one can certainly doubt that the processes described by Braverman are either as clear-cut or categorical as his discussion suggests. One reason for this is that the technological changes constantly taking place in capitalist economies seem more complicated, in their effects upon the labour process, than Braverman allows. Certainly old craft skills are for the most part eliminated, but new types of skilled activity, albeit different in character, are continually created. Of course, what counts as 'skill' is a complicated matter, as Braverman and a host of subsequent commentators have recognised. But the factor of human knowledgeability again enters in here. For what counts as 'skilled work', or a 'skilled trade', depends in some substantial degree upon what can be *made* to count as such. There are many examples where workers have proved able to sustain the definition of themselves as 'skilled' in spite of changes in the nature of the labour task. A classic mode in which this has been achieved is via the 'balkanisation' of the labour market: where access to the occupation has been kept strictly limited by the union or workers' association.

Equally important are the various forms of worker resistance whereby workers have succeeded in maintaining a significant amount of control over the labour process itself. Historical studies of the American working class indicate not only that Taylorism had consistently less impact than Braverman claims, in large degree because of worker resistance, but that the expansion of 'human relations' ideology was partly due to working-class opposition to Taylorism.[19] It is perhaps worth adding that opposition to Taylorism was not confined to those most directly affected by it, the working class. Many employers and managers, in the USA and elsewhere (in contrast to the attitude of Lenin!) were either sceptical of scientific management or openly hostile to it, on a mixture of pragmatic and humanitarian grounds. In adopting such attitudes, even on purely practical grounds, managers were being quite realistic. For those who attempt to control a labour force are by no means impervious to understanding the Marxist adage that 'labour power is a commodity that refuses to be treated like any other commodity'.

This is where the point becomes particularly important that, in capitalistic economies, workers have to be 'managed', without the moral or military sanctions possessed by exploiting classes in prior types of society. In other types of class-divided society, the dominant class has normally had direct possession of the means of violence, and hence of disciplining recalcitrant labour where necessary. But in capitalism (a) regularised labour discipline is more integral to labour than in most contexts (especially that of the peasant producer) of production in earlier forms of society, and (b) the chief coercive sanction employers possess to ensure the compliance of the workforce is that the latter is propertyless, and hence compelled to find employment in order to make a living. It is quite right, I think, to argue that the significance of these phenomena can best be analysed in terms of the capitalist labour contract. But the contractual encounter between capital and wage-labour has to be seen as providing axes of chronic struggle in which the working class is by no means always and inevitably the loser.

There are, I consider, two connecting axes or 'sites' of class struggle in the capitalist societies. One is class struggle in the workplace, the main focus of Braverman's attention. As I have argued, I do not think Braverman adequately acknowledges the significance of such struggle on the level of day-to-day practices on the shopfloor. Braverman's work can here be usefully complemented by studies such as that of Friedman.[20] Friedman argues that not only Braverman but Marx himself, in anticipating the progressive homogenisation of labour through the undermining of skill differentials, fail to give sufficient weight to the influence of worker resistance at the level of the firm, and the need of employers or managers to incorporate the fact of such resistance into their own strategies. Friedman distinguishes two principal types of managerial strategy that are commonly used to control the labour force. One such strategy is that of 'responsible autonomy'.[21] Workers in these circumstances are allowed considerable independence of activity in the work situation, so that they are encouraged to cooperate in accepting technological changes in ways that conform to the overall aims of management. This can be contrasted with the strategy of 'direct control'. Such a strategy approximates to that which Braverman takes to be prevalent throughout industry. Here managers attempt to obtain the compliance of the labour force by close supervision of the labour process, and the sustaining of discipline by minimising worker responsibility through Taylorist techniques. Braverman, says Friedman, exaggerates the scope and the effectiveness of the second of these strategies. This overemphasis follows from 'a failure to appreciate the importance of worker resistance as a force provoking accommodating changes in the mode of production', a mistake which 'leads to a technological deterministic view of capitalist development'.[22] Part of the importance of distinguishing different types of managerial strategy in this way is that it becomes possible to connect the analysis to the study of dual or segmented labour markets. Those in weak positions in segmented labour markets are probably usually less able to resist incorporation within managerial strategies of 'direct control'. Such workers include particularly ethnic minorities – and women.

The second site of class struggle involves the pitting of labour movements against the organised power of employers and of the state. Here we have a prime example of the operation of the dialectic of control. In the early years of the development of capitalism, as Marx showed, the capitalist labour contract was a medium of bolstering the power of the emerging entrepreneurial class. By dissolving feudal bonds of fealty and obligation, the capitalist labour contract allowed for the 'freedom' of employers to buy, and workers to sell, labour power, at its exchange value. By making the relation between employers and workers a purely economic one, abstract 'political' rights were confined to a separate sphere of the polity, a separation first of all supported by property qualifications on the franchise. The capitalist labour contract, however, in the context of parliamentary government, allowed the creation of labour movements based upon the power generated by the threat or actuality of the withdrawal of labour. In my opinion, the struggles of labour movements to improve the general economic conditions of the working class, and to realise what T. H. Marshall calls 'citizenship rights', have helped profoundly to alter the characteristics of the capitalist societies of the West. Braverman is not directly concerned with such issues in his book, but again I do not believe they can be wholly separated from the problems he discusses. For the achievements of Western labour movements have undoubtedly acted to counter the kind of monolithic triumph of capitalism suggested by the style of analysis Braverman develops. Just as Braverman underestimates the significance of worker resistance in the workplace, many other Marxists have been dismissive of the part played by labour movements in transforming what C. B. Macpherson calls the 'liberal' state of the nineteenth century into the 'liberal democratic' state of the twentieth.[23] The worst of these analyses incorporate the flaws of both 'objectivistic' social science and of functionalism:[24] whatever citizenship rights the working class may have obtained are the result of 'adjustments' of the capitalist system protecting its source of labour supply. Consider the judgement of Müller and Neusüss on the welfare state: 'By establishing a minimum subsistence level (through workmen's protection and social security systems) the material existence of wage-labourers is ensured during the times when they cannot sell their labour-power on the market (sickness, old age, unemployment).'[25] Such assessments not only ignore the long-term battles workers have had to conduct in most countries to attain political and welfare rights, but once more treat workers as mere dupes of the system. Evaluations of such a kind have about as much validity as contrary assertions of the sort often heard from conservative sectors of the British press, that 'the country is run by the unions'. At least this second viewpoint does accept that the organised working class has achieved a considerable measure of power in the liberal democratic state, even if it wildly exaggerates the scope of such power.

Conclusion: agency and alienation

In this paper I have concentrated upon indicating that abstract issues of social theory do have a definite bearing upon concrete problems of social analysis. In emphasising the notion of the dialectic of control, I do not mean to imply that those in subordinate positions in social systems are chronically driven to, or are able to, overthrow those who dominate them. I am not suggesting some sort of revised version of Hegel's master–slave dialectic. But I do think the critique of Weber's interpretation of the expansion of bureaucracy (directed against Marxist class analysis) and of works such as that of Braverman (written supposedly precisely from a standpoint of Marxist class analysis) allow a more satisfactory understanding of issues of the relation between class domination and authority systems than their writings provide.[26] In concluding this brief discussion, however, I want to return to a more philosophical plane.

If my arguments about human agency and power in the opening part of the paper are correct, they can be related, I think, to Marx's discussion of the alienated character of capitalist production. To be an agent is to have the capability of 'making a difference', of intervening in the world so as to influence events which occur in that world. To be a *human* agent is to be a highly knowledgeable and skilled individual, who applies that knowledgeability in securing autonomy of action in the course of day-to-day life. By 'alienated labour' Marx refers to work situations in which the worker becomes an appendage of a machine – Braverman's study is about 'alienated labour' in this sense, although he barely mentions the term itself. In my terminology the connection of alienation with the 'human-ness' of man's 'species-being' can be expressed simply and coherently in a single sentence. The more a worker comes close to being an 'appendage of a machine', the more he or she ceases to be a human agent As Marx puts it, 'The animal becomes human and the human becomes animal.'[27] The interest of this analysis for a philosophical anthropology of labour, however, should not make us forget that, precisely because they are not machines, wherever they can do so human actors devise ways of avoiding being treated as such.

Notes

1 See *New Rules of Sociological Method* (London, 1976); *Studies in Social and Political Theory* (London, 1977); *Central Problems in Social Theory* (London, 1979).
2 *Central Problems in Social Theory, op.cit.* (n.1).
3 *Ibid.*
4 *Ibid.* pp. 145ff.
5 See *New Rules of Sociological Method, op.cit.* (n.1).
6 Harry Braverman, *Labor and Monopoly Capital* (New York, 1974.)
7 Max Weber, *Economy and Society* vol. I (California, 1978), p. 223.
8 *Idem, The Methodology of the Social Sciences* (Glencoe, Ill., 1949).
9 Wolfgang Mommsen, *The Age of Bureaucracy* (Oxford, 1974).
10 Cf. Arthur Mitzman, *The Iron Cage: An Historical Interpretation of Max Weber* (New York, 1970).
11 Emile Durkheim, *The Division of Labour in Society* (New York, 1968).
12 Peter M. Blau, *The Dynamics of Bureaucracy* (Chicago, 1955); see also the important discussion in Martin Albrow, *Bureaucracy* (London, 1970).
13 Michel Crozier, *The Bureaucratic Phenomenon* (London, 1964).
14 *Central Problems in Social Theory, op.cit.* (n.1), pp. 147ff.
15 Cf. Reinhard Bendix: *Work and Authority in Industry* (New York, 1963).
16 Braverman, *op.cit.* (n.6), p. 27.
17 See Russell Jacoby's review of *Labor and Monopoly Capital*, in *Telos* no. 29 (1976); and Gavin Mackenzie, 'The Political Economy of the American Working Class', *British Journal of Sociology* vol. 28 (1977).
18 *The Class Structure of the Advanced Societies* (London, 1973), p. 111.
19 Cf. Bryan Palmer, 'Class, Conception and Conflict; the Thrust for Efficiency, Managerial Views of Labour and Working Class Rebellion, 1903–22', *Review of Radical Political Economy* vol. 7 (1975); H. G. J. Aitken, *Taylorism at Watertown Arsenal* (Cambridge, Mass., 1960); Stanley Aronowitz, *False Promises* (New York, 1973), and 'Marx, Braverman, and the Logic of Capital', *Insurgent Sociologist* vol. 8 (1978).
20 Andrew L. Friedman, *Industry and Labour* (London, 1977).
21 Cf. Michael Burawoy, *The Manufacture of Consent* (Chicago, 1979).
22 Friedman, *op.cit.* (n.20), p. 7.
23 C. B. Macpherson, *The Real World of Democracy* (Oxford, 1966).
24 For a critique of functionalism, in the light of the conception of structuration, see 'Functionalism: après la lutte', in my *Studies in Social and Political Theory, op.cit.* (n.1).
25 Wolfgang Müller and Christel Neusüss, 'The "Welfare-state Illusion" and the Contradiction between Wage-labour and Capital', in John Holloway

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26 For the elements of such analysis, see my *A Contemporary Critique of Historical Materialism* (London, 1981).

27 T. B. Bottomore, *Karl Marx: Early Writings* (New York, 1964), p. 125.

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3

A structurationist account of political culture

Patricia Riley

The theory of structuration is proposed as a means of studying organizational culture. This paradigm is used to investigate one of the most significant and fascinating aspects of culture — organizational politics. This study compares organizational political symbols from two professional firms — one routinized and one nonroutinized — in order to investigate the interrelationships of subcultures and to identify the structures that govern the political nature of organizational culture. The results suggest that organizational culture should be viewed as a system of integrated subcultures, not as a unified set of values to which all organizational members ascribe.

> *There is something in the adversity of others that doth not entirely displease us.*
>
> La Rochefoucauld, *Maxims,* 1665

Vivid stories frequently recount the games, strategies, intrigue, and power struggles that mark the inveterate politics of everyday organizational life. "Office politics," or any other terms used to refer to this phenomenon in popular writings and academic research, may be the most talked about aspect of organizational culture (Korda, 1976; Harragan, 1977; Allen et al., 1979; Gandz and Murray, 1980; Kennedy, 1980). Increasingly, people are warned that organizations are not the rational monoliths they appear, but complex mixtures of game playing, rule following, self-promotion, competition, and hidden agendas. This attention to the informal nature of organizational experience is treated more broadly in books such as *Corporate Cultures* (Deal and Kennedy, 1982) and *In Search of Excellence* (Peters and Waterman, 1982), and the general popularization of organizational culture parallels the growing use of the concept of culture in organizational research (Pettigrew, 1979; Smircich, 1981; Pacanowsky and O'Donnell-Trujillo, 1982). As with any new perspective, its vagaries, disjunctions, and confusions must be carefully addressed for the research tradition to advance. One of the most depressing disputes facing organizational culture research is what, exactly, constitutes a culture?

Although the dichotomy is not exact, two major research traditions are emerging: the functionalist approach and the interpretive approach (Smircich, 1981).

Following Burrell and Morgan's (1979) paradigmatic schema, Smircich (1981) delineated the two perspectives and concluded that the functionalist research tradition considers culture to be an organizational variable, something the organization *has*; while the interpretive tradition studies culture as a pattern of symbolic discourse, something the organization *is*. Although these paradigms are quite disparate in their underlying theoretical beliefs about organizations, research methods, and, indeed, the nature of the world, there is a tendency in both toward "unifying" conceptualizations of culture. Those writing in the functionalist tradition give credence to statements about "the ideology of the organization," and researchers in the interpretive paradigm speak of "uncovering the way a particular reality works." These views of culture most often portray organizational systems (whether they are the systems-theory linkages of some concrete reality or the symbolic patterning of systems of discourse) as working together in a shared cohesive totality. The theoretical position expressed in this paper develops an alternative stance — a perspective of organizational cultures that expects organizations to have subcultures and allows for rival images and competing systems of meaning as described in the popular press (Deal and Kennedy, 1982). The primary goal of this research is to explain this perspective — the theory of structuration — so that it may be a foundation for cultural studies as well as for other organizing actions.

A STRUCTURATIONIST VIEW OF CULTURE

"Structuration" (Giddens, 1979) is a metatheory whose principal goal is to connect human action with structural explanation in social analysis. Structuration attempts to merge many of the perceived disjunctions in organizational study by providing an interpretation of such investigative traditions as "framework" research (e.g., formal organizational roles, procedures) and "interaction" research (informal patterned regularities) (Ranson, Hinings, and Greenwood, 1980). The structuring process also allows researchers to bridge the chasms created by macro/micro, and quantitative/qualitative polarizations (McPhee and Poole, 1980). Structuration accomplishes this integration through its conceptualization of structure.

Structures are the rules and resources people use in interaction, and they are analyzed as dualities: they are both the medium and the outcome of interaction. They are the medium, because structures provide the rules and resources individuals must draw on to interact meaningfully. They are its outcome, because rules and resources exist only through being applied and acknowledged in interaction — they have no reality independent of the social practices they constitute (Giddens, 1979).

Structuration, then, is the production and reproduction of social systems through the application of generative rules and resources. In this sense, systems are regularized relations in interaction — not functional relationships between parts of a whole. As Giddens (1979: 65) noted:

> A social system is thus a "structured totality." Structures do not exist in time-space, except in the moments of constitution of social systems. But we can analyze how "deeply-layered" structures are in terms of the historical duration of the practices they recursively organize, and the spatial "breadth" of those interactions. The most deeply-layered practices constitutive of social systems in each of these senses are "institutions."

From this paradigm, the systems of deeply layered structures explain the "framework" of the organization, while people creating and recreating structures form the patterns of interaction. The importance of individuals in structuration needs to be underscored, since they are the carriers and creators of the rules and resources — structures. Thus the stores of knowledge each individual has about interaction in general (a language, grammar rules, social norms to guide conversation, etc.), combined with knowledge of a specific organization (standard operating procedures, the organizational chart, available resources, etc.) can be drawn upon strategically by individuals to achieve their own goals. At the same time, there is a bias for "what has come before," since structures that have been previously drawn upon become part of the stores of knowledge available and are themselves reproduced. Because social systems do not exist apart from each other, together they form layers or levels of organizations. The structuring processes interpenetrate and create complex institutional patterns. Thus structuration is grounded in individual interactions that, over time/space, constitute institutions, and its analyses, therefore, can work to bridge the macro/micro dichotomy.

The simultaneous impact of individual and institutional influences leads to a situation in which the bias for "what has come before" is transformed, and a change in the structuring process occurs. A central concern of structuration theory, therefore, is the identification of the conditions that govern the continuity — or transformation — of structures, and thus the reproduction of systems.

For a number of researchers, structuration appears to have been a useful approach to the study of organizations (e.g., Ranson, Hinings, and Greenwood, 1980; Conrad, 1981; Manning, 1982). Analyzing culture through structuration requires a focus on the more deeply layered systems that can be viewed across time and space — an institutional analysis. In reconciling structuration with previous culture studies, it becomes obvious that this perspective does not fit as neatly into Burrell and Morgan's (1979) schema as does most other culture research.

Structures exist only in their instantiation, and while systems may be conceptually analyzed, they do not exist in any concrete or "real" sense as in the functionalist paradigm. Neither is the perspective purely interpretive, since individuals are the creators and carriers of structures that are generated via rules and resources. Thus a major issue is the power dimension inherent in the ability of an individual to create his or her own reality. What appears to be a phenomenological approach at the individual level of analysis is then reoriented toward radical humanism at the institutional level of structuration. For example, interpretive theorists generally deal "with action as meaning rather than action as praxis — the involvement of actors with the practical realization of interests, including the material transformation of nature through human activity" (Giddens, 1976: 53). Structuration theory, however, crosses the boundary between radical humanism and radical structuralism by its emphasis on deep economic and political structures in institutional analysis. At the same time, this theory is incongruent with both the radical paradigms. There is less focus on the exploitation of individuals, as in Radical Humanism, and more belief in actors' control and knowledge over their actions. Furthermore, the concrete reality of the radical structuralists is the ontological opposite of structuration's symbolically created reality.

Burrell and Morgan (1979) argued that the two most difficult problems facing organizational research are the lack of theoretical coherence in all paradigms except the functional approach and the lack of research methods appropriate to the phenomena being studied. In structuration theory, the theoretical underpinnings are thoroughly identified, examined, and contrasted with other paradigmatic perspectives. In addition, structuration theory's intermediate position on the subjective/objective continuum allows a variety of research methods depending on the level of analysis and the particular phenomenon under study. Thus a qualitative symbolic analysis of interaction, or a quantitative analysis of the duration or breadth of regularized practices, could be used if appropriate for a particular investigation. It must be realized, however, that this process is never objective, and quantifications are made only to enable researchers to segment artificially action that is continuous across time/space.

As the concept of organizational culture is an institutional phenomenon in structuration theory — the deeply layered structures that recursively organize everyday life and practices are institutions — the three major structural features of institutions are analyzed: signification, domination, and legitimation.

In studying signification, it is the codes or modes of coding that are of interest, since every act of communication to or between human beings presupposes a signification system as a necessary condition. Although such coding systems are relatively stable across time/space, new codes can be created, and symbols have the potential to stimulate new meanings through their association with structures such as metaphors. When researchers study the institutional forms through which signification is organized, they are analyzing "symbolic orders." These orders can be thought of as cultural components (e.g., the image members have of their own institution, the trappings of power and prestige in an organization, and the stories of hard work and humble beginnings that help indoctrinate new employees)

Structures of domination are constituted by two major types of resources: authorization and allocation. Authorization refers to capabilities that generate command over objects or material phenomena, and allocation refers to resources. Thus two of the more enduring subsystems of organizations can be analyzed — the political system and the economic system. Both of these subsystems are important to the study of organizational culture (Harragan, 1977; Pfeffer, 1977; Korda, 1976).

Legitimation, or normative regulation, primarily concerns the interplay between value standards and sectional interests and does not necessarily imply collective agreement on "common values." This is a key to understanding a structurationist perspective of culture in organizations: legitimate orders must be embodied as structural conditions of action by some members for them to have binding force, but this does not have to extend to a majority of the members, nor is stability determined by the existence of these common values. Giddens (1979: 103) proposed that the level of normative integration of dominant groups within social systems may be a more important influence on the overall continuity of those systems than how far the majority have "internalized" the same value standards. Thus the existence of distinct subgroups in organizations could easily lead to the existence of subcultures that adhere to different values.

In analyzing institutions through structuration, it is more important to focus on how the signification, domination, and legitimation structures came into being and are sustained, and not merely view them as "givens" or artifacts of the organization's culture. Each of the three aspects of structuration are interrelated and ordered by mediation and transformation. Mediation occurs in all interaction in which each interactant perceives his or her contextual message in light of the other's responses (Giddens, 1976). Since structures also have a transformational quality, they facilitate change through the interpenetration with other structures. This is extremely significant, because of the features of unintended and unacknowledged consequences in structuration. Since action in one system is interrelated with other systems, unintended consequences of action constrain and influence future action. Simultaneously, unacknowledged consequences — those outside the understanding of the actor — combine to imbue the interrelating social system in the organization with a "life of its own." Culture, therefore, should not be analyzed as something an organization *has,* it should be analyzed as part of what the organization *is.*

Since the concept of culture is multivalent, to study it through structuration requires the identification of key structuring elements to focus the investigation and give it coherence. For example, to determine the existence of subcultures in an organization — a goal of this study — a system composed of distinct subgroups is an important element in the analysis. Smircich (1981) suggested that one arena of organizational research in which disynchronous as opposed to unifying behavior has been found is the political atmosphere of organizations. In the system of organizational politics, individuals and subgroups are thought to act more as separate entities than as part of a whole. The issue, then, is whether these subgroups create and sustain separate cultures within the organization — separate institutions.

There are also many structuring elements within the political aspect of organizational culture. To investigate such a large amorphous system, further delineation of the structuring properties is necessary. Although organizational politics could be studied by an analysis of budgetary decisions (allocation), or policymaking (authorization), or from a variety of vantage points, the cultural nature of office politics lends itself well to an analysis of symbolic orders — the cultural components. Thus the symbolic structures of the political aspect of culture can be compared across subgroups to discover whether there is one political image of the organizational culture or a number of political images that represent subcultures in an organization. Political images are composed of political symbols and the language that embodies political intent. Exploring the political nature of organizational culture thus tests the unitary/disynchronous views of culture, while explaining how symbolic orders sustain the forms of domination in the "everyday context of lived experience" and identifying the most basic structural elements that connect signification and legitimation in such a way as to favor dominant interests (Giddens, 1979: 191). In addition, the pervasiveness of organizational politics and the fascination it engenders suggests that this is an extremely important cultural arena for organizational researchers (Allen et al., 1979).

The organization's political image(s) can be discovered by focusing on the patterns and intersections of the institutional structures. Political images are composed of deeply embedded master structures that sustain the organization's, or subgroup's, political self-definition and embody the rules that guide political actions and the chronic political habits that are "mindlessly" enacted. In order to isolate the master structures that form the political image of the organization, I set up the following guidelines:

A. Focus on organizational symbols and language that embody political intentions or display the trappings of political power.

1. Look for evidence of a political or apolitical ideology that might be expressed in organizational myths or stories.
2. Check for attributions and perceptions of political actions in the symbolic language.

B. Analyze the symbolic language identified above in terms of its structuring properties — signification, legitimation, and domination (many signification forms will appear in A).

1. Look for the sanctions, positive and negative, that are related to political actions.
2. Investigate elements that connect signification and legitimation to favor political interests — nonsanctioned ends or means.
3. Find the rules and resources that underlie political power and govern its transformation.
4. Focus on the conflicts and contradictions between the structures.

To clearly organize the political symbols and language into specific types in an institutional analysis, this study posited a 3 x 3 schema of political imagery to content analyze the political themes — complete thoughts or ideas — used by members of an organization. The symbol axis of the schema was constructed using Dandridge, Mitroff, and Joyce's (1980) conceptualization of verbal, action, and material symbols in organizations. The other axis is composed of the key institutional structuring mechanisms — signification, legitimation, and domination. This categorization system allowed me to simultaneously analyze political themes for their symbol type and structuring mechanism, thus helping determine the master structures that form political images (See Table 1).

The categories of material, action, and verbal symbols are, in many ways, like an anthropological typology of culture. The material symbols are the artifacts of the culture — the easiest symbols to spot, but those that explain the least without further knowledge of a culture. The action symbols are the next simplest to identify — activities that occur in particular sequences, or as regularized events, and specifically for this study, methods of political behavior (e.g., ways to control information or covert-influence strategies). The verbal symbols are the language descriptors of the political culture — the metaphors, myths, rumors, and names given in the naming process. Although the conceptual separation of the material category from the other two is easily apparent, the distinction between action and verbal symbols is less obvious. Essentially, action symbols primarily describe the patterns of political behavior, while verbal symbols often use language's inherent

Table 1

Institutional Analysis of a Political Image

		Symbols	
Structures	Verbal	Action	Material
	Metaphors, myths, jokes, legends, names, rumors	Rituals, breaks, covert strategies, information control	Status symbols, logos, furniture, perks
Signification Codes, discursive penetration	You win some, you lose some, all part of the game	We cut him out of the deal before he figured out the rules	It is the image of the executive club that's important.
Legitimation Norms	He is not going to bat for us — stakes are too high.	That we lied to him is no big deal, now we owe him	When you're promoted, you have to dress the part
Domination Authoritative, allocation	They made me the victim in their battle for the kingdom	The boss does not give out helpful information	There are only so many good assignments — he decides

ambiguity to allude to the nature of the political culture (the stories, myths, legends), to explain the culture through metaphors or models, or to determine the political or apolitical nature of a situation by virtue of the name it is given. The verbal symbols are often more abstract, moving the discussion from the here-and-now to the philosophical nature of the political culture, the results of behaving politically, or the aesthetic sense of politics — the art form of political action.

The political symbol types were concurrently analyzed according to the institutional structures that produce and reproduce these symbolic types. The examples in Table 1 demonstrate the rules and resources people draw upon in the production of structures and are elaborated on in the following explanations.

In signification, it is the codes or modes of coding that are important. Researchers are probing the language-in-use to uncover the verbal strategies of individuals and the symbolic order(s) of an organization. An instance of a verbal political theme produced through signification is the metaphorical acknowledgement that "he is really the fair-haired of the bunch." An example of an action political theme produced through signification is the statement that "if you watch to see which manager becomes a regular at lunch with the vice-presidents, you can tell who the next promotion is going to." An illustration of a material political theme is the proclamation that the "real sign of power is having a parking spot under the building." Typical of the kinds of themes produced through signification, these specimens show a great deal of discursive penetration into the situation being described — knowledge of the "language-games" (Conrad, 1981).

Themes of political symbols that are reproduced through legitimation may be treated as the actualization of rights and the enactment of obligations. An inquiry into the symbols reconstituted through legitimation recognizes that not all sanctioning is overt — that the interpretive schemes drawn upon in communication have a strong obligating quality to them and that normative action is a chronic, or habitual, feature in all interaction. An example of a verbal symbol produced through legitimation is an employee using an organization's image to sanction his behavior by noting that "this is an aggressive company, it is OK to be a young Turk." An action political theme generated as a legitimating device is, "It is fine if we play games on the customers, just don't get caught doing it to one of our own." A material symbol that serves to legitimate behavior is the belief that "dressing for success is the company's uniform." It is not always possible to discover "deep" as opposed to "surface" legitimating structures in this content analysis, since deep structures may not be identifiable *in* the topics of the themes. Often, legitimation acts to produce varying actions depending on the risks or on other choices between competing structures. A thematic analysis, therefore, tends to uncover surface legitimating structures.

Structures of domination are composed of two major generative resources: authorization and allocation. Resources for administrative and economic decisions are typically mobilized through domination. Other actions generated through domination are more difficult to discern through a thematic symbol analysis, since power can arise from understanding the codes (signification) and from individually sanctioned activities (legitimation). To assist in distinguishing between the structuring processes, the content analysis used the ability to control resources as the main indicator of domination. A sample of a verbal political symbol characteristic of domination is the drama of an employee who was "the victim in a battle over the kingdom." In the action symbols category, domination is the structuring mechanism in the instance in which "the boss does not give out information that would be helpful to you." A case in which the material symbol is produced through domination is seen in the statement that "there are only so many good assignments to be given out." In this example, having control over assignments is the power to allocate perks.

Qualitative Analysis

As McPhee and Poole (1980) noted, hard-data methods needed to test hypotheses and discover "causal" propositions are not enough; soft-data methods, used to identify structures and their mediation, are also key in structuration theory. In a structurationist sense, political symbols can assist in determining an organization's political master structures — its image(s). These political symbols embody the deeper layers of meaning and the norms that sanction actions, as well as the rules and resources drawn upon in the process of control. Thus this approach is an interpretive-structuring investigation of the language communicated by organizational members.

In this analysis, symbols are not analyzed as discrete outcomes of language, but are analyzed within the duality of structure as both the medium and outcome of interaction. Thus special attention can be given to the conflicts between political and nonpolitical structures and the interplay between internal and external images. Giddens (1979: 191) noted:

> The maintenance of differentiations between publicly displayed aspects of social activities, and those that are kept hidden, is a major element both of the ideological use of symbol-systems by dominant classes or groups, and the response of those in subordinate classes or positions.

Similarly, the identification of public and private symbols and an exploration of their use is a preliminary step in understanding political master structures and their force.

Research Question

This study is specifically concerned with discovering the symbols used in creating the political image(s) of an organization's culture and the reproduction, or transformation, of these symbolic structures across an organization's subgroups. Concurrently, the interplay of these structures is significant in determining how the political aspects of culture are sustained. McPhee and Poole (1980) suggested that initial structurationist organizational studies be designed on a comparative basis, due to the lack of previous research. The literature on a variety of aspects of politics in organizations showed little consensus, leading to the conclusion that organizational politics is highly normative and somewhat idiosyncratic (Madison et al., 1980). Politics appears to depend on individual characteristics (e.g., personality, level in the organization) and the environment of the organization (e.g., task, uncertainty). The primary contextual feature of the organization's task environment that seems most significant in determining a cultural "type" is whether an organization's tasks are highly regulated (deeply embedded rules and regulations) or whether the task environment is flexible (transformational task practices). In the variable analytic approach, organizations that are highly task-structured are usually referred to as routinized and those with little task structure as nonroutinized. These terms were adopted for use in this study.

METHOD

The study is set in a large city on the West Coast. Two firms were chosen that are highly professional subsidiaries of a large parent organization. One organization dealt primarily with government rules and regulations, while the other was a troubleshooter development and training firm. The first organization was highly routinized in its procedures and tasks, while the second firm consistently confronted new problems and situations.[1]

That both organizations were highly professional, located in the same metropolitan area, and similarly organized (both were partnerships) should allow preliminary institutional comparisons from a structurationist perspective. In this case, the context that should generate differences in political culture is task embeddedness — routinized versus nonroutinized task environments.

Sample

The national headquarters approved 50 interviews of their professional employees across the two subsidiary organizations. The interviews lasted from one-half to one hour each and were tape recorded, with the permission of the interviewees. Since clients of the firms were billed at approximately $55 to $100 per hour for the lower level professional and up to $500 per hour for higher level professionals, the study was definitely a research investment for the organizations.

The sample was a stratified two-group comparison, one group from each firm. For each organization, respondents were chosen from the partner, manager, and consultant levels. The number of interviewees decreased rapidly as the hierarchical level increased, because of the pyramidal organization of the firms. Upper management chose the individual interviewees through a modified listing procedure. Those individuals chosen, however, could refuse to participate in the study. Attrition occurred in the 50 designated interviews due to resignation, transfers, and field assignments. In addition, two of the respondents declined to have their interviews recorded. Because the professionals' time was extremely valuable, I ultimately decided not to request a replacement sampling.

Twenty usable interviews were completed for each organization. In the routinized organization ("Firm R"), three respondents were from the partner level, three from the manager level, and fourteen from the professional consultant level. Consultants, the lowest tier in the hierarchy, are usually hired in large numbers to do the detail work — dealing with government rules and regulations and taking care of clients' financial systems. Many are brought into the firm with a B.S. degree or an M.B.A. After approximately five years, the consultants may be promoted to the manager level. In this capacity, they are responsible for the day-to-day activities on a field assignment, and they supervise the project's consultants. After another three or so years, the managers are considered for partnership in the firm. Only those consultants who are promoted to manager are realistically eligible for partnership. In the partnership promotion system, the firm's present partners discuss and vote on managers recommended to them by an executive committee. Only a very few make this cut.

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[1] The organizations were chosen on the basis of their self descriptions matching the definitions of routinized and nonroutinized organizations given in the text

In the nonroutinized organization ("Firm NR"), two respondents were from the partner level, three from the manager level, and fifteen from the professional consultant level. This organization's role as a trouble-shooter and system-designer requires more experience at the entry-level positions than does Firm R. There are many specialties in the organization — some are disciplinary, like computer applications, and some are specific to client work settings, like nonprofit organizations. Consultants are usually hired with more experience, they tend to be older, and they work in more narrowly defined divisional groups than the consultants in Firm R. Because of their prior work experience, promotion to manager and then to partner takes less time in Firm NR, which nullifies the potential age difference, on the average, between personnel at the upper levels of the two firms.[2] Promotion is equally difficult in the two firms, and Firm NR also relies heavily on the work of many lower level consultants who have little chance of remaining with the firm after their trial period. In addition, the manager and partner positions in the two firms are very similar, since the individuals work less in their areas of expertise and more as administrators and policymakers.

Interviews

The organizational politics questions came at the end of an interview in which the respondents were asked to discuss a decision-making situation that had recently occurred — one in which the interviewee knew many of the details of the situation, but not necessarily a situation in which the interviewee was directly involved in the process. This procedure followed the format developed by Zanzi (1981) in which the political questions were designed to appear "natural" in the context of a study on decision making. The wording of the questions varied from the Zanzi study as a result of the concerns of executives in the parent firm. The negotiated and approved political questions were:

1. Do you see political behavior taking place in your immediate organization?

2. Is this organization more or less political than other organizations you have been associated with?

3. What kinds of decisions do you perceive typically to involve organizational politics?

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[2] This information was reported during a preliminary interview with an executive from the parent organization.

4. What strategies are used in organizational politics?

Caveats

Several implications of this research strategy must be discussed. First, generalization across organizations was not a primary goal of this study. The literature synthesis suggests that political practices are highly normative and thus should vary across organizational cultures. This view of organizational politics as an aspect of culture is consistent with structuration theory's notion of interaction as praxis and the examination of meaning within the context of use. To narrow the contextual structuring system differences, organizations were chosen that differ from one another according to a key structuring element — routinization.

Second, I lacked optimum control over the interview process, because top executives perceived the topic as threatening. This resulted in asking questions in a less-than-straightforward manner and in using a more limited repertoire of questions than would be the case otherwise. Also, the wording of questions could not be developed through initial interview techniques at all organizational levels. Therefore, the wording was adapted from previous surveys in the organizational political literature, using information from the executives who approved the study. The items were worded as broadly as possible (simple, primarily open-ended, and fairly neutral, given the topic) to help ensure their applicability to the political culture(s) in the organizations — particularly across hierarchical levels, the major subgroups in the firms.

Finally, because respondents in each firm were not chosen randomly, some caution is required in generalizing to their firm from their interview data. Structuration theory posits that knowledge of practices is never completely shared among individuals in a group, organization, or other collectivity. Thus political images and other cultural components must contain, at some level, a recognition of the individuals who create and recreate these structural patterns. The interviewees were studied to determine if they were chosen by any conceivable system of inclusion or exclusion. While upper management did not appear to have a hidden agenda in its selection of respondents, any selection procedure that relies even partly on volunteers remains biased toward those who either think they are helpful or think they have something to say. This can create a situation in which extreme positions regarding the culture are represented in higher proportions in the data than in the organizational population.

Data Analysis

The interviews were semi-transcribed from the tapes, with any relevant decision-making episodes and the answers to the political questions "flowed" as if they were arguments in a speech. Because this study utilized symbolic themes (and not all communication aspects of the interviews, such as vocal fluctuations), completely detailed transcripts were not needed. A second researcher followed the same procedure with the same tapes and the transcriptions were compared. All major discrepancies were arbitrated by a third research colleague. Those symbolic themes that were determined to be political in nature, again, were selected by the researchers independently, with disputes resolved by a third colleague. Whether or not the themes were determined to be political rested on two criteria: (1) they were in direct response to a political interview question; or (2) the situation being described, or the perception being related, fit the definition of organizational politics (sanctioned ends through nonsanctioned means or nonsanctioned ends through sanctioned means).

This content analysis provided the themes that were investigated via the 3 x 3 schema of political symbols and their structuring mechanisms. I designated each theme as belonging to one of the categories in the schema. Another researcher similarly coded a randomly selected subset of the political themes (20 percent of the themes) as a check on the accuracy of the designations. Together with the guidelines for determining political images, the political symbols analysis was used to compare the political images of Firm R and Firm NR, inspect these cultural components for differences between subgroups, and gain insight into the forces that sustain or transform elements of political cultures.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

That the task routinizations of the two organizations indeed were perceived differently by their members can be deduced from their comments. For example, a member of Firm NR said simply, "It is routine that it (the job) be atypical." In contrast, members of Firm R noted, "It is rare to find a situation with few precedents," or "The firm has procedures on how to resolve disputes," and another said, "The preponderance of people here are real good about following organizational patterns."

Interrater reliability of political theme designation was .79 using Scott's pi (Holsti, 1969). While not overwhelming, this reliability figure is more than acceptable, given the inherent overlap in the structuring processes.

Verbal Symbols: Or Communication as Cliché

This category provided the richest as well as the most amusing data in this analysis. As the repository for metaphors, myths, jokes, legends, names, and rumors, it not only provided insight into political imagery, but also shed light on the nature of workplace communication. The incredible array of clichés, mixed metaphors, and business jargon created an interesting mélange of structures whose purpose, albeit difficult, appeared to be relating, interpreting, and making sense of organizational happenings. To discover the structuring properties, one must first sift through a conglomeration of parables, homilies, "old wives' tales," and befuddled language. While this may be a frustrating experience, it is also highly instructive, in that little organizational research has focused on spoken communication, as it is spoken. Although this language may be discordant, it serves to reproduce organizational institutions and, as such, is an important source of information about the structuring process. A synopsis of the comparison of verbal symbols between Firm R and Firm NR is shown in Table 2.

Signification. For Firm R, the verbal symbols of political imagery were not as rich and varied as those in Firm NR. A number of the members of Firm R saw little political behavior in their organizations; others saw political actions but did not engage in any discursive penetration — insight into the interaction patterns of the institution — or "fantasizing" about the political culture of their organization. Those members who utilized the political master structures that created political images, however, displayed a sophisticated sense of the political element of their organization's culture.

In Firm NR, a quick survey of the verbal symbols indicated that Harragan's (1977) "soft data" investigation of the language of politics is quite accurate — the workplace is pervaded by two main types of symbols: game and military metaphors. The interviews were filled with images of cards and players, wars, teams, battles, armies, pugilistics, and wounds. Game (with a particular emphasis on sports) and military (with a vicarious interest in espionage) scenarios repeatedly emerged along with a discerning sense of their use. One individual "removed" himself from the scene and gave the first act of a play — the political activity was the drama and the politicians were the players.

Firm NR attempts to maintain a solid public front with a smooth and happy image. Actions inside the organizational dramas, however, are not always smooth, as one partner pointed out: "But the other man wouldn't participate — decided that if he couldn't be king, he wouldn't play." Being king, of course, means that one can play politics, because politics is sanctioned for those with power — a key structuring process. In fact, the interviewees took an almost fiendish delight in telling tales of "kings," since understanding the players and rules of the political game is so important. Thus knowledge of the generative mechanisms of political images is itself a form of power.

The game metaphor is also alive and well in Firm R. Promotion to partner is viewed as a highly political process by some members. As one manager noted, "You win some, lose some,

Table 2

Synopsis of Verbal Political Symbols

Structures	Firm R	Firm NR
Signification	Symbol use showed insight into political practices by high-level employees Game metaphor was used in upper levels of the organization Lower level consultants saw a techno-rational image of the firm — an apolitical culture Many symbols embodied an image of objective decision making Insight into the "grey area" — where rules were ambiguous — was a form of power	Symbol use showed insight into political practices throughout the organization — many dramas Political culture was expressed primarily by game and military metaphors Organization attempted to create a smooth, happy image — politics should not be made public Knowledge about the political culture was a form of power Political actions were sanctioned for those with enough power
Legitimation	Practices tended to be rule-following at lower levels of the firm Political culture was well recognized in the higher levels of the firm In order to succeed political practices were not just legitimate, but necessary Some political strategies, like ingratiation, reduced risk	Political practices were sanctioned if the stakes were high enough War metaphor legitimized the competition and conflict structures in politics Competition and conflict were sanctioned when the enemy was outside the firm Competition between subunits was part of the political culture, but disapproved of formally Individual competition was often related to promotion and legitimized by the lack of negative sanctions
Domination	Upper level employees used power to engage in political actions Information was used as a resource Access to resources helped control political situations Needed ambiguity in the system for the political culture to develop	Lower level employees viewed themselves as victims of the political culture The structure of the political culture was hierarchical, those at the bottom lacked power

all part of the game." The image of the firm as a techno-rational model of organizational bureaucracy surfaced in the interviews, particularly among the lower level members of the firm. Apparently, many of the lower echelon members were convinced that objective and quantified criteria were established and followed in the promotion procedure — the only political arena they could identify. One lower level professional did note, however, "All the partners will vote on whether or not I make partner. That we have rules isn't important — rules are never like real life, just a guide." This thoughtful discourse on the "grey area" illuminates the collision of the rational bureaucratic image and the culture generated by the political nature of the promotion process, a master structure.

The major difference between the two organizations in this category is a hierarchical one. The use and insight of verbal political symbols is pervasive in Firm NR, while Firm R appears to have two separate cultures, a highly political culture in the upper echelons of the organization and a fairly apolitical culture at the consultant level, although there is some recognition that promotion is partially a political process.

Legitimation. The game metaphor, in a broad sense, explains the legitimation process in Firm NR by providing the sanctions and generalizations of organizational political practices. For example, there is a relationship between using political structures and the stakes involved. As one lower level interviewee explained: " let the chips fall where they may. If the partner goes to bat, it could raise old wounds." In this mix of sports, military, and game metaphors is an important structuring principle — political actions are not legitimate unless the stakes are high enough. Certain political structures are sanctioned, presuming the risk is worth it. One member referred to politics as "very high stakes at a very high level."

The military metaphor uniquely legitimizes the political culture. One NR consultant described his organization as a collection of entrepreneurs, "with their own little fiefdoms, who gather their armies, prepare for battle, and stock their arsenals." Thus success is defined in terms of war — winning battles, stockpiling resources, and killing the enemy. Because the war metaphor requires an enemy, a battle, a winner, and a loser, conflict and competition are legitimized and a premium is placed on winning.

Competition is a curious structuring property. It is legitimized when the "enemy" is outside the organization, but officially frowned on when it takes place inside the organization, although this occurs in a wide variety of circumstances. Often the interviewees spoke of competition between units in the organization marring the smooth, happy image, caused by some "glitch in the organization." Competition, many believe, is generated by the "mistaken" or "unfair" structuring of the firm's reward system and is not consistent with the "all for one and one for all" team structures. Aside from formal reward systems, however, competition is also generated by a master structure that legitimizes political actions when the stakes are high enough. As one consultant noted, "There is quite a bit of politics. Reasons? Some of it is ambition." Thus the high stakes involved in making partner legitimize competition and create the promotion system's political image. The structuring mechanism that chronically reproduces this system is aided by the lack of negative sanctions against information control, backstabbing, or other competitive structures.

In Firm R, the rational bureaucracy image is generated through structures that legitimate rule-following behavior. These structures are deeply embedded in this routinized firm where the lower echelon members claim that knowing and following procedures is necessary to do their jobs. The culture of this routinized firm is described as a place where "most people follow organizational patterns."

The interviewees from higher levels in the organization, however, expressed different legitimating structures. For these members, rule violations are legitimized in particular contexts in which political practices are accepted. Specific examples concerned actions necessary to keep their bosses happy or to please the big clients: "That's where your bread is buttered — bottom line." Success in these contexts appears to be generated primarily by risk-reducing strategies and structures that produce satisfying outcomes, even if the rules have to be bent or ignored. The key to this process is not upsetting those with power. As one Firm R manager bluntly described the political culture of his organization: "At (Firm R) to a certain degree, it is not who you know but who you blow . . . ." Again, the political image of the upper levels of the organization in Firm R is vastly different from the rule-following culture at the lower level.

The major distinction between the two organizations is that while competition appears to be a key structure in Firm NR, the legitimating political structures in the upper levels of Firm R center around appeasing those with power, by whatever means necessary.

Domination. The verbal symbols of authority and allocation illustrate the power of political images. The image in Firm NR is one in which lower level professionals are pawns in a very large game. One employee told of being a "sacrificial lamb" — of being caught in a drama in which the needs of the situation were overshadowed by personal problems between two partners, and the employee's transfer became the "penance for a past wrong." The tale is a religious drama — complete with guilt, a victim, and someone's redemption — in which the professional is powerless and victimized. Other similar but less vivid stories were told of high-level competition for resources.

Most of Firm NR's political themes in this category are generated by power struggles. These structures, therefore, focus on the lack of individual power and the power relationships that result. In contrast, the majority of the political themes in this category from Firm R take the opposite position — how to utilize power and authority to engage in political actions. In one instance a partner related, "I control the information that goes to those above me for my own purposes." Thus this partner and other high-level employees produce a political culture by the structures they use to control resources.

As would be expected, these structures are most deeply embedded in the top levels of the firm — being recreated by those individuals actually involved in decision-making processes. These structures are rarely drawn on at the bottom of the organization, as they lack two master structuring devices: power as authority and the power inherent in ambiguous processes. One partner stated, "There is very little politics in what lower level professionals do — very regimented and rule oriented. The more grey, the more politics."

In the domination category, the two organizations differed primarily on their image of power as an element of the political culture. Firm NR's members felt victimized by the power structures, while those at the upper levels of Firm R's hierarchy viewed resources as a means to generate power and control the political culture, not be controlled.

Action Symbols: Do Unto Others

Action symbols express rituals, strategies, processes like decision making, and organizational "socialization." A synopsis of the results of the political themes analysis is found in Table 3.

Signification. Playing or not playing the game is a major concern of the members of Firm NR. They often commented on this symbolic activity and its impact on the culture of the organization. One manager noted, "It is very political to get ahead — have to be a successful person in the social swim outside, and do this internally — don't say no, don't rebel." The guidebook to success includes a number of structuring actions — conformity, social skills and relationships, and insight into the political culture. The lament of one member was that these actions should have been illegitimate structures of success and that the political culture existed in the absence of rational, objective rules.

The game itself can take many forms. One of the more fascinating aspects of the political culture is the use of covert strategies. One of the NR professionals explained, "We weasel word things, (play) semantic games . . . ." In such cases, knowledge of language's ambiguity can be used as a covert political strategy to play the game. In this particular example,

Table 3

Synopsis of Action Political Symbols

Structures	Firm R	Firm NR
Signification	Everyone had to play the game	Everyone had to play the game
	Success required understanding the firm's political culture and gaining access to the informal network	Success required understanding the firm's political culture, conformity, and social skills
	Covert strategies included actions like controlling information	Covert strategies of control included using the ambiguity of language, information, and the naming process
Legitimation	Numerous covert strategies of political action were used	Numerous covert strategies of political action were used
	Informal repayment procedures were developed for employees caught engaging in political acts against another employee	Intergroup competition partially created the political culture
	Firm had no negative sanctions for political actions — encouragement by default	Political culture engendered secretive and wary actions from employees
		Tactics included scapegoating and documenting
		One division did not legitimate political acts — had a "politics is nonsense" image and operated with a teamwork master structure
		Distinct subcultures coexisted in the same firm
Domination	Resources were people, information control, and coalitions	The power to allocate resources reproduced power; being allocated resources was a base of power — "them that has, gets"
	Personal authority was used for both personal and organizational ends	Size decreased risk
		Promotion process lost its controlling power over individuals once they quit playing the game
		The "politics is nonsense" subgroup produced no domination structures

information control and strategic communication are both the political resources being drawn upon and a structuring mechanism that produces the political image of game playing. This process is recursive, these structures achieve ends — individual or organizational — and, in turn, they garner new resources.

In one example, a semantic game is used as a covert strategy to promote Firm NR's image as an efficient organization and, simultaneously, acts as a structure to control the firm's members: "We don't have a procedure for delays, we don't use that word," explained one lower level technical expert. By *not* naming an occurrence, the organization implicitly applies negative sanctions — control through the absence of a symbol for a procedure.

In Firm R, members also have to play the game, and the key structuring system is one of information control. Gaining access to the informal network is a process of learning "what makes this place tick." In all, the use of action symbols in signification structures is quite consistent across both organizations, with an emphasis on communication institutions. These embedded practices operate as dualities — they reproduce the political culture and, concurrently, are used as resources by individual politicians in their quest for advancement.

Legitimation. This structuring mechanism generates numerous covert strategies in Firm NR. The key master structure is competition, which legitimizes actions that otherwise would provoke negative sanctions from the firm. In one instance, a partner described "influencing something they couldn't otherwise accomplish," and another said he "does things on the side without asking," and yet another member explained, ". . . have goals to meet — if you can't do it one way, how can you create the illusion . . . ?" This partner went on to note that these actions were produced by the organization, that the political culture was partially generated by competition between divisions in the organization: "The stronger push harder." Thus the structures of covert action are created by the interaction of individual and subgroup goal structures and the firm's incentive and promotion systems. Another master structure is produced, one in which the ends justify the means.

This internal competition, in part, produces a political culture in which employees are often wary of each other, are secretive, and use tactics such as blaming, for their personal benefit. In one case, the consultant complained, "We refused to do it his way — now it is coming back to haunt us." Another warned, "document everything — cover your rear end." This distrust is generated through both verbal (scapegoating) and action (documenting) legitimizing structures. The result is a "take care of yourself first" political image.

This same issue appears in Firm R, but the risks associated with such actions appear to be less than in Firm NR. Although the covert nature of the strategies implies that negative consequences would occur if those actions were discovered, Firm R seems to avoid using negative sanctions in such situations. One partner described a scenario of artfully disguised political strategies that completely unravelled and forced his executive partner to engage in some face-saving behavior. He went on to explain, ". . . We screwed up, . . . we did not mind taking the blame because we were more interested in the outcome. Now, fortunately, this person has come to me with some favors." Thus a covert strategy was uncovered, the organization engaged in some ceremonial hand-slapping, and the person who was the victim was repayed with "obligations," because not-officially-sanctioned means had been used in the situation. The organization has managed to institutionalize an informal quid pro quo process that does not formally admit to actions that contradict the techno-rational image of the firm. The lack of actual negative consequences likely acts to reproduce the covert structures and the political aspect of the culture.

An intriguing situation was found in the political themes in this category. Disgruntled employees can be found in many organizations, but Firm NR members definitely grumbled about the political nature of their organizational culture, particularly at the bottom level. One consultant flatly stated, "Partnerships are inherently political." Deviations from this view of culture, however, were apparent, and an investigation of the sources of these themes found that they were almost all from one division in Firm NR. This division produces its own image of itself, distinct from the political image of the rest of the firm. The participative decision-making structures and symbols of trust combine to generate a supportive system and an apolitical culture. This subgroup is also highly aware that it is different from the rest of the organization, as the managing partner stated, "I like collective decision making. This is not common in (NR) — more traditional."

This image was not just being created for the benefit of the interviewer. Numerous group members expressed this image and stated that they "feel like a unit" and "get along." In contrast to most other lower level professionals who viewed political structures as the way to get ahead and exist in their culture, one member of this division remarked, "We don't get involved in that nonsense." One of his colleagues said he did not need to worry about the political aspect of the culture, "I trust him (the partner) enough."

These themes not only lack political symbols, but they could easily be from an entirely different firm. The deviation of this division from the rest of the organization was also noted by those outside the subgroup — they spoke of the one partner who was "people oriented." This superior-subordinate relationship creates an open system noted for its power equality and generates a cohesive image — a "we-ness" not found in other subgroups in which the "take care of yourself first" image is predominant. Thus the conflicting structures of teamwork and individual goals produced a different institution in this subgroup — teamwork became the master structure.

That this subgroup utilizes a different master structure is extremely significant. Ostensibly, the deeply embedded, legitimate, competitive structures in the firm are not produced solely by the incentive and promotion systems, but are also generated by the managerial decision-making systems. The decision-making structuring process is different in one subgroup and generates a different culture from the rest of the organization — one in which office politics are not legitimate. Obviously, other elements may be important in this institution's development (e.g., leadership skills, member personalities), but the significant finding is that such distinct cultures can coexist in one organization.

Domination. In any discussion of political decisions in organizations, the allocation of resources plays an important role. This was particularly true for Firm NR. As one member noted, "Allocation is a political decision." As a means of domination, allocation is an easily recognized duality — the power to allocate resources reproduces one's power. At the same time, having resources allocated to one is also a form of power. Thus a master structure in Firm NR could be construed as "them that has, gets."

A related issue is the amount of resources available to any unit or individual. Because competition for resources is viewed as inherent in most of the organization, size and resources are critical issues in the decision-making process. One NR partner explained that the notion of size as a base of power becomes a risk-reducing strategy, "You have to build a team to share the credit and the blame." Other power indicators are also related to the risk-taking structure, as one interviewee claimed, "I can take risks because I'll never be a partner." Thus the process that recursively produces power through the promotion system can be transformed, and that power becomes evanescent once an individual decides either not to play the game or that promotion is not a desired, or attainable, goal structure.

None of these structuring processes, however, pertain to the "participative decision-making" division in Firm NR. Interestingly, none of the action symbols whose primary generative mechanism is domination came from the subgroup with the "politics is nonsense" image of their culture.

The preeminence of resources in the domination category can also be seen in an example from Firm R, but this time the scarce resource was a person, and the power tactic was to marshall support from those who had power — those higher in the organization. In essence, one division needed the services of personnel in another division, but the partner in charge of the employees in question did not want to cooperate. To block the transfer, the employees' partner went "higher up" to gain support and began distorting information that was given to the employees, to further confuse the situation.

In this case, the allocation of resources — the employees — was the focus of the power struggle, and the structuring process was one of coalition building and information control. These strategies are difficult for the firm to control, because their power bases are related to personal authority, and authority is legitimized by the hierarchy and partnership structures in the organization. Equally complicating the situation was the fact that staff members are usually the focus of power struggles when an important client needs their services. Since individual partners have a personal stake in seeing their own clients well served — important clients form part of their personal power base — the "ends justifies the means" master structure was the key structuring process.

In the domination category, both firms were found to be concerned with the allocation of scarce resources, and both reproduced their power by maintaining control over resources, by political means if necessary.

Material Symbols — $$$

Material symbols are less complex than the other symbols discussed previously in this study, often acting as simple "signs." Because the relationships involved in the production of political images through material symbols are less complicated, the signification, legitimation, and domination categories were collapsed for the analysis of the structuring properties. A synopsis of the results of the investigation of political material symbols is found in Table 4.

Not surprisingly, in Firm NR, money was one of the more oft-mentioned material symbols. As one manager noted, "The firm is based on incentive — if you get promoted, you get money and power. Power means getting your way." He went on to say, "You get parking, your own office." The obvious perks that come with promotion, like money, are primarily important because they symbolize power. This symbolic usage encompasses all forms of structuring properties. The material symbols act as signs, legitimate the status and behavior of those to whom they have been given, and serve as bases of power for individuals or subgroups. These symbols identify the levels of the status hierarchy and act as the stakes in the competition structures.

Table 4

Synopsis of Material Political Symbols

Firm R	Firm NR
Symbols varied depending on the employee's position, all employees were concerned with external image but partners focused on positive symbols of power while nonpartners focused on their lack of symbols of power	Promotion, money, parking privileges and office space all acted as signs of power
Partners *used* symbols of power while nonpartners dreamed of using them	Important assignments and important clients gave employees visibility, both internally and externally
	Having a mentor was a sign that the employee was a "power to be."

In Firm NR, several unique symbols are deeply embedded in the institutional practices. The first is assignments. Large and important clients are a symbol of the individual's "worth" to the organization. One of the partners described receiving such an assignment as "a plum for someone who wanted visibility — to be seen." Visibility, of course, will help the professional become a partner, and once he or she rises to that level, continued visibility is a resource — both for the individual and for that partner's subgroup. Other measures of the employees' worth are their pay scale and billing rate.

Finally, the presence of a mentor in the organization was considered necessary by many for an individual's political survival, "pulling the employee along." Having a mentor signifies that the consultant is being groomed for partnership — that he or she is a "power to be." The practice of mentorship legitimizes an informal organizational relationship in which regular information channels are bypassed and preferential decisions can be made regarding assignments or other perks.

The material symbols mentioned by the members of Firm R were very similar to those in Firm NR. There were differences, however, between the symbols used by two levels in the organization — partners and nonpartners. Although both subgroups focused on the external image, the partners spoke of "client visibility," "large billings," and the "size of the organization." The consultants and managers talked about the perks, or rather their lack of perks. One consultant complained that his image with his clients was hurt because he was not allowed to use the firm's luncheon club. The other difference that emerged from this analysis was that partners *used* material symbols — the lollipops and chips they distributed to those under them as rewards or to curry favors — while the nonpartners dreamed of using them.

The material symbols garnered from the analysis of Firm R's political themes were strikingly similar to those found in Firm NR's themes. They were primarily related to personal or organizational images and to the role of those images as signs and resources in the status hierarchy. Such symbols are extremely significant in the political culture, since maintaining visibility, both internally and externally, is paramount in the promotion system. And the have-nots — those on the lower rungs — fretfully await the day they can "park by the building" — the sign that they have arrived.

CONCLUSION

What is most intriguing about organizational culture is the influence it has on the lives of those who live and work within its confines. This power extends to their perceptions, their desires, their goals, and their actions. This structurationist account of organizational culture was designed to explicate the underlying processes of this influence and to develop some guidelines for studying culture from this perspective.

In the context of everyday organizational experience, individuals draw on largely unconscious patterns that form the formal and informal rules and procedures, the language they use to communicate, and even their knowledge and personalities. By using these structures again and again, these individuals relegitimate what was past, provide a medium for the present, and set the stage for the future — this is the cultural mechanism. The bias for what has come before embeds a myriad of patterns into a complex system of symbols, norms, and control mechanisms that create and sustain the organization. This vision of organizational life celebrates its complexity; a necessary condition of a system that centers around individuals as the creators and carriers of the structures. This is not a view of unified values that control their adherents, but a perspective bound by the tensions of sectional interests and integrated through regularized practices. It is the combination of individuals and institutions that creates culture.

Of the many elements that form an organizational culture, the political aspect is one of the most compelling, probably because it is antithetical to most organizational concerns. While a compendium of organizational research would probably show a fixation on people working together to efficiently and effectively achieve joint goals, actual working conditions often bear little resemblance to this scenario. A structurationist view of culture does not see political acts as unexpected, but, instead, provides an explanation of the rival images, individual goals, coalition building, and dominant interests that are facets of organizational experience.

The results of this study support a dysynchronous view of organizational culture. The separate images produced by those in the upper echelons and those in lower levels clearly reflected the power of the dominant subgroup. The enactment of individual goals and desires, to the detriment of others, was also easily isolated. Finally, that one division insulated itself from the rest of the organization, protected by its partner, and declared that they were different from others in the organization — not political — is evidence that distinct subcultures can emerge in one organization.

Structuration allows other findings to be seen in a new light. For example, an organization that promotes an image of teamwork while legitimizing internal competition may not have a "glitch" in the organization. This may actually be a control mechanism produced by the element of contradiction — there may be just enough interplay between the structures for the organization to simultaneously maintain its teamwork public image while using competition as an individual motivator. In this case, both internal and external political actions may benefit the organization.

That the difference in routinization in the task environment of the two organizations points to explicit distinctions in the political cultures of the two firms is also illuminating. The structures that govern task continuity apparently are part of the cultural mechanism. Thus members of the rule-governed firm view organizational life according to the rules and exhibit little insight into the political, or nonrational side of the organization — until they move to a higher level of the organization, where the tasks are more ambiguous. In the nonroutinized organization, with its increased task ambiguity at all levels, there is a pervasive sense of politics in the organization's culture, except for the "politics is nonsense" division. The lack of rules in Firm NR's tasks is generally reproduced in its culture, allowing the culture to be more political, or perhaps merely sensitizing its members to the potential uses of ambiguity in a variety of structures. Thus the culture of the nonroutinized firm may not be much more political than the culture of the routinized firm, it may just be better understood.

Finally, the power of the theory of structuration for studying the generation of symbols also supports the popular press notion that organizational political cultures are primarily male domains. The language of political symbols — sports, military, "who you blow" — does nothing to deny this perspective. The male language recreates the domination of male sectional interests in the political cultures, and this was consistent across both organizations.

The results highlighted in this section, and others from this study, point to some specific areas of future research and some general questions that need to be explored. First, the existence of subcultures in organizations calls for the investigation of subunits in organizations, and for not always expecting "a" culture in an organization. Second, the cultural distinctions produced by differing task structures call for an investigation of the regularity of these cultural types — e.g., do rule-governed task environments usually produce rule-governed cultures? Third, researchers should focus on the rival images. When separate cultures develop in an organization, what are the key structuring elements — the leadership, the task, the status of the subgroup? Fourth, what is necessary for the transformation of structures? As the workplace changes because of new technology, the aging of the workforce, or any of a number of institutional changes, how resistant will organizational cultures be to the transformation process? If organizational development is conceptualized as planned cultural change, how should the intervention incorporate the existence of mindlessly re-created structures of everyday practices? These are examples of areas in which a structurationist analysis of cultures should provide unique insights.

This study is the start of a research program designed to identify the deep structures that produce different political cultures in organizations, but it is only an example of an enormous array of possible studies. The complexities of organizational cultures are just beginning to be explored, and the theory of structuration embraces the interplay of people and systems as the embodiment of the cultural mechanism — why the organization is what it is.

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Interorganizational dialectics

Gerald Zeitz

This article outlines a framework for interorganizational analysis based on dialectical thought drawn from the Hegel-Marx tradition. The following points are featured: organizations construct major portions of their environments through the production of resources and through their control of interaction networks; organizational actions and interactions are channeled and constrained through structured resources and through networks of relationships; conflict between organizations is both system-integrative and system-disintegrative, as the resolution of old conflicts leads to generation of new ones; and, finally, the production of interorganizational research itself has reactive effects on interorganizational networks. This framework is seen as a stimulus and guide to empirical research, suggesting important variables and typical processes.

A number of authors in the last fifteen years have suggested focusing on interorganizational relationships as an important subfield of organizational analysis (Evan, 1966; Guetzkow, 1966; Turk, 1977). One persistent claim has been the possibility, and desirability, of developing a general theoretical framework for this area, and a number of provocative theoretical perspectives have been offered: exchange theory (Levine and White, 1961; Cook, 1977), ecological theory (cf. Guetzkow, 1966; Aldrich and Pfeffer, 1976), systems theory (Turk, 1973), sociometry (Anderson, 1967), network analysis (Aldrich, 1980), and political economy (Benson, 1975). Yet none of these has met with widespread acceptance by researchers, and indeed none has received extensive empirical testing. Some of these schemes have in fact been mere conceptual frameworks or heuristic devices — insightful and suggestive, and for that reason often quoted, yet lacking the explanatory force of full theory. One reason for this situation may be that the prevailing positivist conception of science (cf. Hempel, 1965; Wallace, 1971) is not suitable to the reality of interorganizational relationships. These phenomena are characterized by tremendous variety, pervasive change and conflict, the presence of a great number of confounding variables, and especially the propensity for some organizations to socially construct their own environments. In contrast, the positivist idea of science, as promulgated in many social science textbooks (cf. Reynolds, 1971; Babbie, 1979), stresses the importance of locating stable patterns of behavior and of formulating general theories that apply regardless of particular circumstances. In particular, positivism stresses the independence and externality of the social world from the researcher — "methodological dualism" as characterized by Gouldner (1970: 495). It is not that more comprehensive "deductive" theories in the positivist mode could not in principle be formulated, but it seems reasonable at the present time to consider alternative formulations — a paradigm shift in Kuhn's sense (1970). It is suggested that such a new orientation to interorganizational relations can be provided by dialectical thought, having its origins in the philosophy of Hegel (1931) and the social science of Marx (1973).

I will argue that a dialectical model of social systems can be extended to power and resource relations in interorganizational networks, where organizations, rather than individuals or classes, are the actors. The following points are featured in this perspective: organizations construct major portions of their environments through the production of resources and through their control of interaction networks; organizational actions and interactions are channeled and constrained through structured resources and through networks of relationships; conflict between organizations is both system-integrative and system-disintegrative, as the resolution of old conflicts leads to generation of new ones; and, finally, the production of interorganizational research itself has reactive effects on interorganizational networks.

Consistent with dialectical thought, the status assigned to this proposed framework is that of a potential logic of interaction which serves to focus the researcher's attention. This framework will be more than a heuristic device, since it suggests typical tendencies in relationships, and yet it is not a general theory, setting forth deterministic relationships that are applicable regardless of specific context (cf. Turner, 1978: 376). This framework can presumably apply to interorganizational networks in any industrial society. It should be noted, however, that most of the empirical literature cited here, and most of the literature available, is based on contemporary American society.

DIALECTICAL INTERACTION

The term dialectic itself is neither clear nor univocal.

Schneider (1971), for instance, lists seven meanings, and Hall (1967) gives eight, and adds that he mentions only the more important ones. This article will attempt simultaneously to develop one coherent view of dialectical interaction and, also, to indicate how this applies to, and illuminates, interorganizational phenomena. In its most general and loosest sense, dialectics refers to any aspect of social processes having to do with conflict, paradox, mutual interaction, unintended consequence, and the like. In this sense even Spencer (1896) can be considered a dialectical thinker, since he deals with the unintended consequences of action. In its most specific sense, dialectics refers to the particular historical processes in the economies of capitalist society — dialectical materialism of orthodox Marxism. In contrast to both of these uses, I use dialectics to refer to the basic logic of social interaction as recognized explicitly by Hegel, and then developed and applied empirically by a number of analysts, among whom Marx figures prominently, but including also Gurvitch (1962), Lukacz (1971), Habermas (1976), Marcuse (1976), Howard (1977), and others (cf. Radnitzky, 1970).[1]

The major focus of this dialectical framework is the dilemma that social action seems to be both active and self-determining, and yet also passive and constrained. Social scientists have been aware of this dilemma and different theorists have stressed one or the other direction of causal determination. The dialectical position is that both tendencies exist and represent stages in a continuing interactive process; the creative actions of intentional subjects become constrained by structures that are residues of previous actions. Two analytic concepts are important here: organizational actor and external resources. Organizational actor implies a distinct organizational unit having (a) its own internal polity and economy, (b) some degree of autonomy from deterministic environmental forces, and (c) some ability to affect, shape, or manipulate its environment.

Precisely what constitutes such an organizational actor is often problematic, but the dialectical perspective provides a framework for locating them empirically. Organizational units are defined by their ability to control an immediate field of resources (cf. Child, 1972: 9) and to affect outside elements, including other actors and external resources. Neither location, name, technological independence, nor consensual values are themselves invariable guides to such real unity. As organizations define themselves as units they affect the definition of other units, since control by one organization implies lack of control by another. Resources outside one organization's immediate orbit of administrative control are thus defined as "external resources." These become the source of external dependencies and the objects of strategic action.

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[1] The attempt here will be to extract certain formal principles of dialectical interactions, which then may apply in a variety of specific contexts. Marx's *Das Kapital* serves as one prominent example of the application of dialectical thought to interfirm relationships. Yet Marx does not explicate those relationships, and thus it is not clear how his model would apply to other types of interorganizational fields, such as government organizations or social welfare agencies. Further, Marx's treatment assumes competitive relationships in the economic marketplace of a liberal capitalist society; it is not clear, for instance, to what extent this model applies to late capitalist society (cf. Mandel, 1975). Therefore, the need still remains to explicate the principles of dialectical interaction that may apply more generally to interorganizational phenomena.

The notion of external resources refers to any phenomena, external to the organization, upon which the organization depends for its development. Resources are thus conceived broadly here and can include raw materials, technologies, land, and financial resources, as well as administrative linkages, laws, personnel, communication networks, legitimacy, and language. Any effort to classify resources would be exceedingly complex and never final. Indeed, what constitutes a "resource" is that it is some phenomenon for which organizations perceive a need. Although they may be real objects, resources are not necessarily "things" having material existence apart from organizations.

The various resources can be arrayed on a dimension from those that are the most material and have a real physical existence apart from organizations, to those that are merely symbolic and exist only by virtue of social relationships between members. Ecological resources, such as land, distance, density, fall into the former category, while symbolic resources, such as language and legitimacy, fall into the latter category. Intermediate types would be technology, administrative linkages, and human capital. To the extent that resources have been created or usefully transformed by organizational action, they will be referred to as the products of action. It does not follow that all resources have been products, but presumably most have.

A further feature of interorganizational networks is that behind the unit actors lie unorganized and semiorganized interests consisting of individuals, groups, and classes. These interests engage in organizing activity in order to secure resources from the environment (cf. McCarthy and Zald, 1977). In one sense it is more accurate to refer to "organizing activity" rather than to organizations, since the latter implies a stability and unity which may not exist (cf. Heydebrand, 1977). Nonetheless, relatively enduring centers or "nodes" (cf. Laumann, Galaskiewicz, and Marsden, 1978) do form, and these come to represent their own interests, as well as those of an outside constituency. The organizational node maintains integration and relative autonomy only as a point of tension between both outside interests and external resources. For example, a corporation may define the working lives of its employees as an internal resource, but a movement by employees to unionize creates a new organizational node, the union, which can then enter into a relationship with the corporation. It also externalizes the resource of labor power which hitherto was considered internal.

Four interrelated aspects of dialectical processes are dealt with in this article: (1) the externalization of the products of organizational action and their constraining effect on interaction between organizations; (2) the unequal exchange of resources and the subsequent development of systems of domination; (3) the integration as well as disintegration of social systems through conflict and crisis brought about by system contradictions; and (4) the reactive effects of interorganizational research on the phenomena studied. Each of these points is integrally related to one another. The primary focus here is the productive action of subjects giving forth external resources, which become exchanged and which lead to systems of unequal control. Such systems develop conflicts and crisis tendencies as a result of irrational allocation of resources and conflicts between members. Throughout, rational human awareness creates the potential for radical disruption of the constraining influence of patterned resources. This becomes particularly acute when resource structures no longer reinforce one consistent pattern of activity. Each of these points will be developed and applied to interorganizational phenomena in the following sections.

THE DIALECTICS OF RESOURCE EXTERNALIZATION

The resources produced by organizational action constitute the same field of resources on which action is dependent. Thus resource manipulation and environmental enactment constitute a stage of active control; but this is merely part of a larger process in which resources persist as the residues of action. These resources thus come to constrain and channel future organizational action. In Marxist thought, this process is represented under capitalism as one of the "externalization" of commodities and subsequent loss of control to the dynamics of the marketplace. The ultimate reappropriation of control is seen as occurring during periods of economic crisis, and involves assertion of political control by an organized working class.

Three moments or stages in the resource externalization process are discussed: the most frequent stage is resource dependency, where organizations are relatively determined by environments. The second stage consists of those less frequent instances of active control or manipulation of environments. And finally the stage of residualization and persistence of resources deals with the dissipation of active control and its transformation into its opposite.

Resource Dependencies

A number of authors have focused on the constraints that resource structures place on organizational action and interaction (Emery and Trist, 1965; Aldrich, 1976). This has been developed into an explicit "resource dependency" model, most notably by Pfeffer and Salancik (1978), who provided an exhaustive review of the empirical literature describing these dependencies. The notion of dependency is also explicit in the exchange model, either in its most general formulation (cf. Emerson, 1962, 1976) or in its specific application to interorganizational relations (cf. Cook, 1977). To the extent that the sources of resources and the manner of securing them remains stable, interactions between organizations tend to fall into repeatable patterns. Even if elites attempt to exercise "strategic choice," their discretion is limited both by the actual structure of resources, and by their perceptions of possible alternative sources. However, resource structures cannot be altered at will, and indeed tend to persist over time.

Resource dependencies affect interactions in a variety of ways. When the reward system and the current patterning of resources reinforce a particular type of interaction, and when this is consistent with the goals of controlling interests of organizations, interactions are largely reproduced and thus are predictable. The individual organization exercises little creative control of the system and the structures seem to "determine" action. The interests of individual organizations and of systems are mutually adapted to one another, and consensual values prevail. Such phases occur especially during periods of system growth and resource expansion. A second phase occurs when structural requirements tend to distort organizational actions. Here the intentions of actors are frequently opposed to the goals supported by the structure of resources, and systems are characterized by high rates of tension. Dominant structural tendencies encourage a basic pattern of interaction but they do so inconsistently, and with many counterforces. Contemporary American business-government relationships exemplify this phase, where production for profit is encouraged by the reward structure, but with strong counter-tendencies from the need for environmental conservation, social welfare expenditures, and the like. This phase is characterized by a negative structural determination, in that structural influences oppose the intentions of organizational actors. One effect of this is that goal displacement occurs frequently as organizations encounter highly uncertain environments.

In the final phase, periods of crisis are reached where no consistent interactions are supported by the structure of resources, and there is a strong tendency for systems to falter and break down. During this period some organizations or groups of organizations, especially those that are large and powerful, may creatively shape outcomes and transform existing structures. Such for instance, appeared to be the case during the 1973 Arab-Israeli war, when the major oil companies decided not to challenge the new oil pricing structure, thus allowing it to become established (Sampson, 1975).

The point here is not that positive structural moments, negative structural moments and creative action-in-crisis necessarily follow each other in temporal succession, though they may sometimes do so. Rather, under normal circumstances the actions of specific organizations have small, merely incremental effects on interorganizational structures, and this tends to reproduce the structure. But at other times, during structurally induced crises, organizations may creatively reorient and restructure relationships.

Active Control of Environments

A second moment or stage of the interaction process consists of those instances of active control which organizations possess over their environments (cf., Child, 1972). Indeed, Pfeffer and Salancik (1978) document a range of organization-environment transactions in which organizational elites exercise control over environments, ranging from "enactment" (cf. Weick, 1969) of perceived environments to actual manipulation of political and economic processes. The dialectical point is that such moments of control are not empirically separable from moments of constraint. Each interaction must be created anew by organizational action, subject to constraints induced by resource dependencies. In the process of reproduction, however, incremental or drastic changes in the patterns of interaction may occur during periods of crisis.

Giddens (1976) makes a distinction between "structuration" and "structure" which is useful here. Structuration refers to the actual process of action and interaction as it is historically and contextually situated. Structure refers to that analytically distinguishable pattern that may be perceived among a group of actors; it exists "out of time" (p. 120) and is "subjectless" (p. 121). Structuration is effected by the contingent acts by situated actors who make use of, and are constrained by, existing resource structures. Structuration gives forth determinate resources that partially reconstitute structures and that tend to endure after their creation. Structure and structuration thus constitute two analytically distinct phases of interactions (note that Giddens' treatment applies to actors generally, not just organizations), but they do not describe empirically distinct types of phenomena.

These changes wrought through structuration are not all imperceptible and incremental. Specific organizations, or small, tightly coupled networks of organization, can dramatically reorient structures. Precisely how this occurs needs to be further investigated, but research already suggests several conditions under which such manipulation may take place. For instance, Turk (1977) has pointed out that the relevant environment of organizations is increasingly constituted by other organizations. Networks of organizations are thus susceptible to manipulation by constituent organizations, especially as they reach oligarchic concentration (Pfeffer and Salancik, 1978; cf. Karpik, 1978). Organizational actions become increasingly "political" as they develop conscious strategies to control other organizations. The environment is likely to be negotiated rather than the result of unconscious, incremental actions. Further, the very decisions taken to assure adaptation to environments create disturbances in that environment. The environment, consisting largely of interorganizational networks, changes its form as an organization adapts to it. As Terreberry (1968) pointed out, environments develop from a state of "placid randomness," where the ecological model seems most applicable, to become "turbulent fields" where the reactive effects of strategic choices become paramount.

Certain characteristics of organizations create a likelihood for such environmental manipulation, and for those traits that give access to critical resources. Large size is one of the most important of these traits since it is effective over many different types of interorganizational fields. Likewise, organizations that create economic resources are likely to dominate those that distribute resources, such as social welfare agencies (cf. O'Connor, 1973). Research indicates that organizations providing financial resources dominate whole networks of nonfinancial organizations (Fitch and Oppenheimer, 1970). Some organizations achieve control over others largely by affecting the conditions of interaction, rather than through specific interorganizational exchanges. For instance, regulatory agencies affect the conditions of economic exchange, and symbol-creating organizations can have a pervasive effect on entire communication structures. Finally, network theorists, using the concept of "action set," have shown how centrality of position in a network can lead to a pyramiding of control beyond that attributable to any specific resource (Mitchell, 1969; Aldrich, 1980). This is perhaps one further reason for the disproportionate control held by financial corporations over nonfinancial corporations. This is a brief and unsystematic list of some general conditions that conduce toward environmental manipulation; many conditions specific to certain types of organizations could be detailed. The important point is that these conditions provide the potentiality for control: in order to be effective they must be combined with appropriate strategies by organizational actors.

The Persistence of Structures

The third moment of the resource externalization process consists of the transformation of creative actions into enduring patterns. This occurs because the resources produced by action tend to persist over time and thus are able to constrain future interactions. Each type of resource, in each particular context, presumably has its own decay function or rate and manner of dissipation. The decay function is a product of the internal characteristics of external resource and the interorganizational network in which it is embedded. Resources that involve material objects are likely to be highly "persistent" and rather removed from immediate control, by virtue of their material character. Even here, however, the network of relationships itself creates the context in which this material persistence is also a persistence as a resource. To give one example, it can be claimed that the dependency on oil is structured into the physical design of homes, automobiles, and industry. Yet the persistence of oil as a needed resource is enhanced by policies which continue the production of automobiles with only minor changes in fuel requirements, and by continued inaction regarding the development of alternate energy sources.

Characteristics of the material environment appear to have especially long decay functions and to be highly constraining to certain kinds of interaction, especially those involving transfer of material resources, or those requiring face-to-face interaction of personnel. Geographical clustering can thus be noted in a wide variety of organizations, even if new transportation technologies are lessening the need for clustering of processing plants near sources of raw materials. However, symbol- and people-processing organizations still retain a high need for personal interaction between organizations. The highly uncertain environments in which they operate require that personnel be able to interact daily, for instance over the "business lunch." Organizations that provide personal-services to people are highly constrained by the need to be located closely to target population centers. Clearly, once large-scale investments in plants, offices, and transportation have been established, they have a strong tendency to persist, based in part on the physical inertia of their physical constitution. However, while such ecological factors present relatively enduring, visible constraints to interaction between organizations, they are not always merely external, "natural" factors, removed from control. As Harvey

(1976) has pointed out, ecology is in part a "built" environment which is the result of past policy decisions by specific firms.

Networks of informal contacts among organizations are seen as facilitating work-related communication, although they can also act as constraints when they require interactions that are not appropriate to the task. Such contacts are probably at most weakly constraining, since alternative channe can be developed if necessary. Likewise, while some suc contact may persist for a long time, such as those based on "old school" ties, the majority are probably rather fleeting and can be generated as situations demand. Thus such informal contacts, in contrast to ecological factors, may generally be tenuous and offer only minimal constraint.

Both the persistence and the constraining effect of structured resources depend on the particular interorganizational framework in which they are embedded. Careful consideration of both persistence and constraint will allow the researcher to estimate the future changes in interorganizational networks. One example may serve to illustrate this point. In the early 1960s great effort and resources were mobilized to improve services for the mentally retarded. In 1965 the federal government funded a project in several cities to improve coordination among service agencies, some of which were private, voluntary associations. The focal organization in one of the cities was the welfare planning agency associated with the United Fund. The strategy of this project was to develop voluntary communication linkages, including both informal contacts and formal, but voluntary, linking associations. The project existed for five years and expended about $600,000 in grant money. Yet in the opinion of evaluators (Aiken et al., 1975) it not only did not achieve lasting coordination, but instead it created strong barriers to future coordination.

A main cause of this project's lack of success was its failure to estimate both the decay function of the preexisting interorganizational networks as well as the constraining effects of those developed by the project. Prior to the project some degree of coordination had been achieved by voluntary cooperative efforts Small networks of voluntary associations had been developed, presenting constraints to the coordinating efforts of the welfare planning agency. These networks looked on the agency not as a disinterested actor, attempting to achieve rationality in the system it serves, but as a rival, and thus they effectively blocked much of the agency's efforts. The project did succeed in developing some coordinating networks, but these networks largely excluded the public agencies. With the termination of the project's grant money, the initiative for coordination passed to the public boards and agencies, who were the only organizations sufficiently powerful to exert control. However, at this point the stronger interorganizational structures among the private agencies persisted and further constrained efforts at system wide coordination.

UNEQUAL EXCHANGE

The second aspect of dialectical interaction deals with the exchange of the externalized products of organizational action. Exchange of resources ties together differentiated units and promotes collaboration and mutual development. But to state this is no more than to repeat what economic and social exchange theorists have long argued (Smith, 1937; Blau, 1964; Emerson, 1976). In general, however, classical exchange theory has made a set of assumptions that collectively reinforce the notion that both efficiency and distributive justice obtain in systems of exchange (cf. Homans, 1961). These assumptions are (1) that exchanging parties have a basic equality of status, either legal equality or equality of opportunity; (2) that exchange brings about the mutual benefit of the parties involved, that is, that the exchange ratio tends to be equal; (3) that exchange decisions are made voluntarily, that is, with an absence of coercion; and (4) all parties have adequate knowledge of costs and alternatives, that is, "market conditions." I refer to these collectively as the conditions of equal exchange.

The dialectical view accepts that these conditions can characterize one aspect of systems of exchange, especially at their early developmental stage, but it points toward another side that develops from the first, and exists in tension with it. Thus, differentiation of function also implies differential expropriation of resources by the actors involved. Any inequality in the exchange of products leads to inequality in the resources available for productive activities and ultimately to unequal control over the procedural conditions of exchange (cf. Baumgartner et al., 1976). Likewise, while exchange may involve mutual benefit, there is no guarantee that the total benefit to each party (where "total benefit" equals rewards minus costs) will be equal (cf. Emmanuel, 1972; Ekeh, 1974: 211). This is related to the third condition, namely that exchange decisions may be severely constrained by lack of suitable alternatives and thus may be less than fully "voluntary." A disadvantaged party, with fewer resources or some other structural disadvantage, may be forced into exchange in order to survive, or to meet some legal requirement imposed by the advantaged party. Finally, information is often systematically limited and distorted, and this may accrue to the advantage of the dominant partner. Thus, as inequality between exchange partners mounts, the preconditions of equal exchange are transformed into their dialectical opposites. Systems of voluntary and equal exchange become systems of domination and even exploitation (cf. Emerson, 1962, 1976). I should note that Blau (1964) recognized that the dynamics of exchange lead "dialectically" to systems of unequal power and authority. Blau's view differed from the one developed here in two respects: first, Blau argued that such systems of power are emergent structures that replace exchange relationships, rather than transform them into the "unequal exchange." Second, Blau argued that exchange partners become dominant by contributing greater amounts of resources, and once dominant they contribute utilities equal to what they receive merely by exercising power in a way that subordinate actors perceive as fair. There is thus no consideration of the possibility that dominant partners may use their position to alter the exchange ratio in their favor.

The movement toward inequality is not a deterministic process, but only an immanent tendency of social interaction. Such tendencies in interorganizational networks can be checked by powerful actors or forces outside the specific subsystems. For instance, professional football teams are regulated by league rules that specify that losing teams receive higher choices in the college draft. This acts as a counterforce to the tendency of winning teams to use their receipts to garner disproportionate amounts of talent. On the other hand, federal regulatory agencies have shown a general inability to check the movement toward concentration of resources in business firms, though they probably have slowed down the rate of increase.

CONTRADICTIONS AS A SOURCE OF CRISIS AND CONFLICT

The third feature of dialectical interaction is that the production and exchange of resources lead to system contradictions. "Contradiction" means a condition of social systems such that an element is both a necessary condition for the development of another element, and a sufficient condition for its transformation. Contradictions affect organizational actions in that it becomes impossible to accomplish intended goals in a rational manner. Unexpected results distort actions and lead to structural imbalances and ultimately to crises. I will discuss three related kinds of contradictions leading to three kinds of system problems and crisis tendencies.

Resource Requirement Contradictions

First, contradictions are brought about by the fact that differing forces or processes become out of phase with one another, such that the development of one process tends to impede the development of other processes. This involves contradictory demands for sets of resources, and not just competition. That is, resource requirements for one process are inherently antithetical to the requirements of another process, and this antithesis is an inescapable feature of the system. This leads to the sort of crisis in which one or both of the processes can no longer develop sufficiently.

One important contradiction in interorganizational relationships is between technological resources and the administrative forms needed to manage them effectively. For instance, it has been noted that there is an imbalance between the interdependence in treatment modalities in social service agencies, and yet fragmentation in interorganizational delivery systems (Aiken et al., 1975). Likewise, the great need for systematic planning between the different levels and units of government is recognized, but planning is hindered by autonomy of local governments and by frequent duplication of function. Systems develop crises when one or both processes do not receive a needed resource from the other and thus can not function effectively. For instance, the success of interdependent treatment modalities requires close coordination between organizations. The lack of administrative mechanisms to achieve coordination leads to ineffective processing of clients, and ultimately to a drying up of input resources and, in particular, funds, as other organizations find they are not dependent on the ineffective services given.

Resource Distribution Contradictions

A second form of contradiction is the irrationality of system operation due to the imbalance of resource distribution between organizations. This can mean that resources distributed to some organizations are inadequate while elsewhere resources are overly supplied. The geographical concentration of health resources in metropolitan area hospitals is one example of such imbalances. A more pressing example has to do with the unequal concentration of new investment capital in business corporations in "sunbelt" states, while there is inadequate investment in older industrialized regions (Rifkin and Barber, 1978). The crisis brought on by such imbalances can seem most like a simple managerial problem, since it seems to involve inefficient distribution of resources that are in adequate supply.

Contradictions and Dialectical Conflict

Finally, contradictions arise when the resources required by one organization are controlled by another, leading to competition and manifest conflict. Several aspects of conflict are important. To begin with, it is often the case that conflict and cooperation are mutually interdependent in a given social interaction. This occurs because the division of labor between organizations creates resource interdependencies and thus some tendency for cooperation. It also creates differences in real interests and in perceptions about those interests, and these are both sources of conflict. Simmel (1956) referred to this as "antagonistic cooperation" and Warren, Bergrunder, and Rose (1974) find evidence for it in relationships between community agencies. Similarly, Hall (1974) finds that conflict and cooperation are empirically related in interorganizational relations between agencies serving delinquent youth. The mutual interdependence upon which exchange is based provides fertile ground both for acts of cooperation and acts of conflict and opposition. Cooperation may increase interdependency, yet decrease awareness of the need for further compromise, thus leading to intensification of conflict. Likewise, conflicts lead to mutual interaction and thus establish the basis for interdependence and cooperation: former enemies become the best of friends, while former partners often feel the greatest antipathy.

Dialectical conflict also means that the resolution of conflict provides the basis for a new conflict. Resolutions of conflicts may redistribute resources equally, but some hidden basis of unequal exchange will lead eventually to further imbalances and then overt conflict. Thus, the resolution of conflict is rarely complete and systems rarely become fully stabilized. Resolution of conflict provides the basis for continued "normal" operation, but potential conflicts between groups become intense and overt when developing inequality or irrationality decreases the rewards of "normal" operation and increases the amount to be gained by alternative arrangements. One may attempt to impose an administered solution on a conflict situation by setting up a regulatory agency that is supposedly outside the system which contains the contending organizations. However, the organizations that control the administration of the imposed solution themselves may become the nucleus of a new elite group and thus the source of further contention. This latter process typically occurs when new organizations are created to administer competing organizations, for instance coordinating or regulating agencies. Such organizations either do not successfully resolve the conflict, or they do succeed, in which case they develop sufficient resources to become the focus of new power struggles.

Finally, conflict provides an important basis of partial system integration (Coser, 1956). Indeed, social collectivities are seen in dialectical sociology as existing essentially in tension with their external environments (Ollman, 1971). Social groups are made up of potentially antagonistic units, that come to unity through antagonistic interaction with external units. This is what is meant by the paradoxical dialectical notion that social units exist by virtue of their opposition or tension with other units. One implication of this is that organizations have a basic conflict of interest with one another merely by virtue of the fact that they are equally separate-corporate units. That is, organizations are quasi-autonomous collectivities, upon which members, clients, and owners depend, and which in turn are dependent on social resources as inputs. The existence of separate organizations inherently means relatively autonomous centers of power and resources and thus some degree of conflict of interest (cf. Litwak, 1970; Turk, 1977). Such horizontal conflict between organizations is limited by the tension between interorganizational networks and elements outside the network. Thus competition between capitalist firms is moderated by the need to form a unified front against unions or government agencies. Competing social service agencies will cede some autonomy to United Fund planning agencies in order to gain resources for the entire field. The classic Marxian analysis of interfirm relations asserts that capitalists engage in continuous competition, in which the bigger capitalists "gobble up" the smaller ones. At the same time this network of capitalist firms as a whole is in conflict with other networks and with unorganized and semiorganized interests. Internal cooperation will be enhanced to the extent that there is an external threat.

Nevertheless, the existence of partial conflict between organizations does not necessarily imply a plurality of competing, relatively equal power centers, since inequality of resources means that some organizations, through unequal exchange, coercion, or formal authority, may be in a position to systematically dominate other organizations. In particular, whole networks that have internally differentiated centers of power may be in a position to dominate other whole networks. This latter situation seems to be true regarding the dominance of major corporations in capitalist societies over smaller corporations, and over nonprofit human service organizations (Mills, 1956; O'Connor, 1973). Even within this network of major corporations it has been argued persuasively that large financial corporations are "first among equals," exercising control over clusters of nonfinancial corporations, as was pointed out above.

REACTIVITY AND CONSCIOUSNESS

"In-House" Organizational Research

The final dimension of dialectical interaction involves the reactivity of awareness of patterned relationships on those very relationships (cf. Friedrich, 1972). Interactions between organizations are reproduced by the weight of structured resources such as the technological and ecological changes noted above, that persist long after they have been produced. Structured resources constrain action in large part because they become accepted by actors as natural, or at least as inaccessible to present action. If organizational actors do not articulate the possibility of manipulating structured resources, and if they do not conceptualize strategies for so doing, then such resources will have a determining effect greater than that traceable to their inherent characteristics alone. This constraining effect of the lack of proper awareness has been referred to in the Marxian dialectical literature as "reification." Some conceptual similarity to the Mertonian notion of the "self-fulfilling prophecies" should be especially important.

Organizations typically control far greater resources than do isolated individuals. Yet organizations typically do not manipulate resources effectively, due to inadequate surveillance of the environment and their inability to process information fully. As March and Simon (1958) pointed out, the organization must select only portions of its potential environment on which to focus, and must construct limited channels of communication to decision makers. As a result the effective environment for decision makers is an "enacted" (cf. Weick, 1969) environment that constrains what actions will be taken. Organizational boundary-spanners can be looked on as "in-house" researchers, attempting to generate knowledge about interorganization relationships and to feed this back into policy making, yet being limited by their selective channels of perception.

Academic Organizational Research

An additional source of environmental awareness for organizations is the interorganizational research carried on by academic researchers, who have varying degrees of proximity to organizational elites. Some researchers are highly attuned to the needs of organizational elites and are often commissioned by them. Others are more disinterested, typically those in academic departments, but even here covert channels to decision makers may exist. For instance, much of the interorganizational research published by sociologists in the last fifteen years was funded by agencies of the federal government to develop ways of improving coordination (cf. Aiken and Hage, 1968; Litwak, 1970). This is not to argue that all such research is utilized in a rational fashion by policy makers to affect interorganizational networks. Much of its real effect may be merely symbolic, creating a pretense of concern by agents who are charged with rational management of the interorganizational system. Nevertheless, even these symbolic effects are real in that they may disarm or channel the efforts of potential change agents in the system.

The renewed interest in the reactive effects of social research (cf. Rule, 1978) is due in part to the increasing tendency for social research to be commissioned by organizations and to be explicitly fed back into policy making. It is increasingly difficult to think of social relations as phenomena "out there," uninfluenced by research findings (cf. Gouldner, 1970: 488). As a result, a number of authors have argued in favor of a "reflexive" approach to sociology, where the researcher is aware of the effects of research in the process of doing it (cf. Gouldner, 1970; Friedrich, 1972). Some of these advocates, coming from the phenomenological tradition (cf. Heap and Roth, 1973), focus in particular on the ability of individual actors to affect their own actions by the manner in which they construct their own worlds of thought. However, this focus overlooks the macro processes involving power and resource relationships between organizations, where reactive effects are likely to be strong. It seems that such reactive effects are especially likely to characterize interorganizational relationships.

CONCLUSION

This article has outlined certain basic principles of dialectical interaction, and suggested their applicability to interorganizational relations. Four interrelated points were featured: the externalization of action in its determinate products, the tendency toward inequality in exchange, the existence of contradictions leading to crisis and conflict, and the reactive effects of conscious awareness on policy making. The notion of resources played a key role in this framework: as products of action they serve as the principal means through which patterns of interaction are reproduced. Emphasis was placed on the persistence of resources and their continued ability to constrain interactions long after they are produced.

A theory of interorganizational dialectics might orient researchers toward an alternative framework and stimulate future research aimed at uncovering specific instances of dialectical interaction between organizations. This framework can perhaps break the current impasse in interorganizational theory, much of which is due to its positivist methodological foundations. This is shown in the recent discussion about resource dependencies, which tend to be arrayed in static alternative hypotheses: either organizations manipulate and control environments, or environments dominate and constrain organizations. The present framework suggests that controlling and being controlled are both parts of a continuous interactive process. Research should focus not on amassing evidence to prove one or the other model, but rather on examining the historical construction and unfolding of environments as they result from the strategic choice of organizational elites. These environments may, under certain conditions, react back and constrain their constituent organizations.

Similarly, the social exchange model provides a framework that may explain some voluntary dyadic exchanges between autonomous organizations. But the search for simple comprehensive assumptions of exchange, begun under the positivist program of Homans (1961), leads ultimately to a trivialization evident in Emerson's treatment (1976), where the exchange perspective becomes equivalent to the assumption that people do not usually do something without getting something in return. This alone can hardly explain the development of complex interorganizational systems, and does not assert anything not already assumed in neoclassical economic models. Furthermore, the exchange perspective tends to overlook the fact that systems of equal exchange develop dialectically into complex, emergent structures in which concealment, manipulation, and domination are pervasive. The network approach provides important methodological techniques, and usefully points out that network contacts can improve effectiveness. However, network analysis often implies a static conception of interorganizational relationships, and tends to overlook the negotiations that continually restructure networks.

Several areas may be pursued by a dialectical analysis. First, research is needed to determine the conditions under which organizations are able to construct their environment, using active strategies of control and manipulation. A preliminary hypothesis is that large size, production of economic resources, centrality in networks, and national or international scope of operation all tend to lead to successful active strategies. It also seems likely that structure-defining actions will occur especially during periods of crisis. A second area of research will be to delineate the major interorganizational fields and the specific logic of interaction involved in each. Attention should be given to the principal contradictions, the crisis tendencies, the conditions of exchange, and the types of resources which most constrain interactions. Third, it is important to examine in detail how the resources produced by action come to persist and to constrain interactions at later time points. Such research must necessarily be longitudinal in order to understand how the differential "decay curves" affect interactions. Indeed, a major assumption of this paper is that the dialectical process of action, context-creation, and constraint is essentially historical. The existing weight of ecological, technological, economic, and symbolic constraints is not fully determining since these resources are not completely removed from control by intentional action.

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Source: G. Zeitz, 'Interorganizational dialectics', *Administrative Science Quarterly* vol. 25, March 1980, pp. 72–88.

Annotated bibliography

Highly recommended

Bourdieu, P. *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1977.

This is an excellent book which is concerned with the development of a theory of how practices are generated. Bourdieu argues that to understand how practices are generated one must 'abandon the dichotomy of the economic and the non-economic which stands in the way of seeing the science of economic practices as a particular case of a *general science of the economy of practices*, capable of treating all practices as economic practices directed towards the maximising of material or symbolic profit' (1977, p. 183).

Dahrendorf, R. *Life Chances: Approaches to Social and Political Theory*. Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, 1979.

Within the text of this monograph this book is discussed in relation to administration. The dialectic between options and ligatures is seen as a way through which people's life chances evolve. While such a dialectic could and can, through Van de Ven's work, be used to examine domination and exploitation, Dahrendorf uses it in a contrary fashion. The dialectic is used to support the neo-liberal position of division of labour through the equality of opportunity but inequality of outcomes.

Giddens, A. *Central Problems in Social Theory: Action, Structure and Contradiction in Social Analysis*. Macmillan, London, 1979.

Giddens, A. *A Contemporary Critique of Historical Materialism*, Vol.1 *Power, Property and the State*. Macmillan, London, 1981.

These are powerful books which have a profound influence in all areas of social science and which further develop Giddens's theory of structuration. Through this theory Giddens seeks to resolve the problems inherent in the traditional functionalist view of society and institutions. The problem of structure and agency is resolved through the concept of the duality of structure. Giddens argues that this entails viewing social structures as both the medium and the outcome of social practices.

Recommended

Benson, J.K. 'Innovation and crisis in organizational analysis'. *Sociological Quarterly*, vol. 18, 1977, pp. 3-16.

In this paper Benson argues that the study of complex organisations is going through a period of crisis which is related to four analytical problems, those of *action, power, levels* and *process*. Benson suggests that future directions might be with action theory as developed by Silverman or in a dialectical analysis of organisations as he himself is formulating.

Benson, J.K. 'Organizations: A dialectical view'. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, vol. 22, no. 1, 1977, pp. 1-21.

This is the classic paper on dialectics within organisations. Benson attempts to present a way of analysing organisations that is an alternative to the functionalist theories which are based on positivist methodology. In contrast to the predominant static conception of organisations, a dialectical view is concerned with process and transformation as human beings produce their social structures but within a social context.

Harmon, M. M. *Action Theory for Public Administration*. Longman, New York, 1981.
Harmon is concerned with putting forward an action approach towards public administration. While reflecting the earlier work of David Silverman, the book is part of the 'new public administration' movement in the United States of America. This in part is seeking to develop a phenomenological view of public administration.

Ranson, S., Hinings, B., & Greenwood, R. 'The structuring of organizational structure'. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, vol. 25, no.1, 1980, pp. 1-17.
The authors use the theory of structuration to examine and explain how the structures of organisations change over time. They feel that the writings of Bourdieu and Giddens offer greater insights into the relationships that exist between organisational interaction and framework.

Wardell, M. L., & Benson, J.K. 'A dialectical view: Foundation for an alternative sociological method'. In S. G. McNall (ed.). *Theoretical Perspectives in Sociology*. St Martin's Press, New York, 1979.
Wardell and Benson put forward the use of a dialectical view of society and its institutions. This view, they argue, entails three committments – production, contradiction and totality. Such an analysis would allow the exploration of the potentialities of alternatives and change to contribute to the reconstruction rather than the reification and reproduction of social institutions.

White, O.F. 'The dialectical organization: An alternative to bureaucracy'. *Public Administration Review*, vol. 29, 1969, pp. 32-42.
This is one of the earlier papers in the 'new public administration' movement. White attempts to move away from the traditional conceptions by postulating a dialectical organisation which is continually in the state of process. As client demands are continually transformed, so the operations of people within the organisation are affected and a new synthesis of operations and client needs is generated.

Willmott, H. 'The structuring of organizational structure: A note'. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, vol. 26, no. 3, 1981, pp. 470-74.
Willmott, while welcoming the use of Bourdieu's and Giddens's work in the analysis of organisation, critiques the paper of Ranson, Hinings and Greenwood. In particular he argues that the Giddens idea of structure is more complex than just a medium of control. Structure is made up of a number of properties that interact within time and space. Moreover, structure is not merely a controlling or constraining element but is also enabling and enhancing.

About the author

Peter Watkins had been a teacher in the Victorian Education Department for twenty years before joining Deakin University. He completed an MEd in educational administration at Monash University, studying the power relationships in five technical schools. He then commenced doctoral studies, and completed his PhD at Deakin in 1982. The thesis examined a Year 11 group's perceptions of work before and after going out on work experience. His main interests are the relationships between school and work; organisational power; workplace democracy; and the development of a critical analysis of organisations.

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